Rabindranath Tagore, the man and his Poetry

BASANTA KOOMAR ROY

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RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore
May 6. 1916

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The Man and His Poetry

BY
BASANTA KOOMAR ROY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY HAMILTON W. MABIE

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TO

THE FAINT MEMORY OF

MY MOTHER

WHO DIED IN MY EARLY CHILDHOOD, AND

TO

MY GRANDMOTHER

WHO NURTURED ME,

THIS BOOK IS MOST LOVINGLY
DEDICATED

PREFATORY NOTE

For the last thirty-five years Rabindranath Tagore, India's greatest living poet, has been in the public eye in India for his poetic excellence, patriotic fervour and physical attractiveness. But it was only in the summer of 1912 that this great poet was introduced to the West by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats. The English papers and magazines were full of enthusiastic eulogies on him. Some of them even deplored the decadence of poetry in the West, and lauded the Hindu poet to the skies as a man representing genuine poetical feeling.

In the autumn of the same year, Tagore came to America. Unnoticed he came to this great country, and unnoticed he left in the spring of 1913. In the winter of the latter year he was awarded the Nobel Prize for idealistic literature, and he at once gained an unprecedented international reputation as a poet.

At present he is nothing short of a literary sensation throughout the world.

My first paper on Tagore was published in July, 1913; and at the time of the award it was about the only article in English that gave an idea of the wonderful personality of the poet. So it was quoted and translated in many countries of the world. During my lecture trips in different parts of America, I have felt the demand for a book on Tagore. These circumstances have encouraged me to publish the present volume.

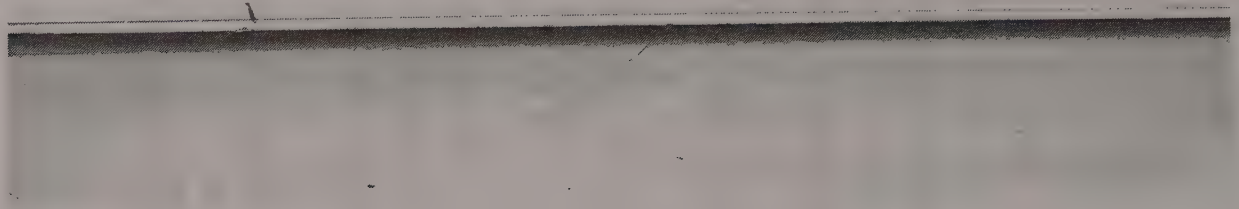
My personal acquaintance with the poet and his family has helped me a great deal in writing this book. I have, wherever possible, tried my best to represent Tagore in his own words in my translation. The translations are not always literal. At times I have been obliged to translate the thought rather than the words, just to avoid unpleasant phraseology. Almost all the quotations in the book are translations; and unless otherwise expressly stated, these have been made by the author.

My thanks are due to Dr. Paul S. Reinsch,

the present United States Minister to China, and Professor Willard G. Bleyer of the University of Wisconsin, who encouraged me to write my first article on Tagore; to Rathindranath Tagore, the poet's only son living, and Somendranath Burman, a devotee of Tagore, for presenting me with books and pamphlets that have been useful in preparing the present volume. I must here thank the editors of the *Yale Review*, *The Independent*, *The Open Court*, *The Bookman*, *The Book News Monthly*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The Craftsman*, for their permission to use parts of my different articles on Tagore that first appeared in their pages. And I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the Macmillan Company for their kind permission to make use of certain poems and prose quotations from the following copyrighted books: "The Gardener," "Gitanjali," "Sadhana" and "Songs of Kabir."

BASANTA KOOMAR ROY.

NEW YORK CITY,
February 12, 1915.



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INTRODUCTION

TAGORE'S poetry needed precisely the background which this sympathetic sketch of his childhood, education and activities brings before Western readers. As the recipient of the Nobel prize for Literature his name gained a sudden publicity in the West, and the intellectual curiosity which is one of the characteristics of the time secured for the translations of his books which began to appear a wide reading. Many readers into whose hands these books came found them vague and elusive in thought, and as remote in form from the experimental and agitated verse of the hour as the moonlight ecstasy of the nightingale from a policeman's rattle. There were some, however, who found in the Bengali poet the joy of discovery, the refreshment that comes from contact with another order of mind.

The fluent transcriptions of Oriental thought with which Edwin Arnold fed the desire for new and strange interpretations of Nature and life were comfortable adaptations of Eastern ways of thought and speech to Western habits and taste; they made things easy for those who hunger and thirst for local colour, but they brought neither aid nor comfort to those who wanted to understand the ideas behind Oriental imagery and art.

These are precisely what Tagore gives us, in the forms of expression which have been shaped in the atmosphere generated by these ideas. He is a modern man in whose prose and verse the genius of his race is as distinct and unobscured as if they had been written a thousand years ago. For this reason he is a very important figure in the coming together of the East and West which promises to be the most dramatic and perhaps the most important event of this century. The irritation incident to the establishment of closer relations between civil-

isations as far apart as those of the Orient and Occident will give place to a clear recognition of the value of the achievements of both sections of the world and of the resources, spiritual and artistic, supplied by diversity of temperament.

The gains of this new appraisement of past services will come, not from any sacrifice of the integrity of what appear to be conflicting ideals in the endeavour to secure harmony by compromise, but from a clear definition of those ideals. It will probably appear that those ideals are complementary rather than antagonistic; it is obvious that each section has over-emphasised the aspect of truth which has appealed to it; and much of the divergence will disappear when each section understands more clearly the point of view of the other. In any event, nothing will be gained by blurring the differences; much will be gained by giving them the sharpest definition.

We must understand the East if we are to

deal justly and wisely with the delicate and difficult questions already raised by more intimate relations. Those questions will become dangerous to the peace of the world unless sympathy, knowledge and imagination unite in the endeavour to set them at rest. The West has exploited the East too long. The habit of dealing with countries from the standpoint of business advantage does not conduce to an understanding of those countries. As a rule no class knows less about the spirit and character of a people than those who live among them for purposes of exploitation. The door of understanding closes automatically when a people is approached in this spirit. And dealing with a people for the sake of the profit that can be made out of them inevitably breeds that sense of superiority which is the source of arrogance and assumption and makes normal and wholesome relations between races impossible.

Tagore's work is deeply rooted in the soil of Oriental religion and civilisation; its imagery,

language and informing spirit are unaffectedly and therefore uncompromisingly Oriental. He is the man of the Far East uttering the deepest and most characteristic thought of that ancient world with a sincerity so deep that we cannot miss his essential message to us, though it demands from us the exercise of faculties which have become almost atrophied by disuse.

He makes no concession to our habit of formal logic; to the literalism of phrase which we have come to regard as the evidence of sincerity and clear thinking. The Western statesmen who are called upon to formulate a Far Eastern policy ought to be required to take an examination in Tagore's "Sadhana" and "The King of the Dark Chamber."

No account of a living man can make any claim to completeness or finality; but in the case of a writer so far removed from our habits of thought and ways of living as Tagore it stands in no need of explanation or apology. For many readers Tagore is further away than

the writers of the 16th century; the distance in thought obscures the nearness in time. This distance is strikingly brought out by comparing this study of the Indian poet with Franklin's "Autobiography" or Mills' "Autobiography." The scenery which forms the background of these diverse biographies is not more radically different than are the ways of thinking and the habits of life they report. It gives one a kind of shock to read what Tagore has to say about the condition of women in India in contrast with their condition in Europe and in this country. It is wholesome to have a generally accepted view so unconcernedly disregarded, as if it were too unintelligent to be challenged. It revives the hope of ultimate emancipation from absorption in material interests to read of the activities of a man to whom these interests make no appeal. The American who expects his Indian friend to be awed by the colossal scale of the "sky-scrapers" discovers that he is oppressed rather than impressed

by them. If he is making an estimate of our civilisation he is likely to put them on the debit side of the account; they retard rather than advance spiritual progress. This implied challenge to Western activities and immediate aims runs through this study of a representative Oriental; it is not belligerent; it lies in the presentation of ideas of life so different that they compel a re-examination of the claims of Western civilisation.

The service of a poet of Tagore's distinction lies in his eloquent and moving faith in ideals and an attitude towards life which make us realise that, without surrendering our fundamental conception of the integrity of personality and the group of truths that flow from it, the East has much to teach us in the way of a broader and richer interpretation of both divine and human personality; a psychology at once more subtle and more serviceable in the use of mind and body; an intimacy with nature which will strike a truer balance between meditation and

action, and put behind efficiency a restraining idealism. In the civilisation of the future East and West will secure a harmony between the life of thought and the life of action."

This account of Tagore's interests and activities, his devotion to education and his methods of dealing with boys, his habits of work, his hopes for India, gives Western readers an intimate impression of a personality formed by Eastern ideas and conditions, and disclosing the richness and beauty which flow from them and witness to their vitality and value. As a poet Tagore needs no commentator save a willingness to see truth from the other side of the world and to give the imagination its rightful place beside the critical faculty. His thought is elusive and must be patiently pursued, and his speech is saturated with symbolism and imagery; he cannot be read at full speed; he must be waited upon and communed with. But if he demands much it is because he has much to give; and what he has to give is pre-

cisely what we need in this over-worked Western world and this eager, impatient age.

HAMILTON W. MABIE.

New York, February, 1915.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

CHAPTER I

FAMILY—EARLY YEARS—PRECOCIOUS POET

Poetry is a part of our daily life in India. The first blessing the newly born baby receives on entering this world is couched in verse. When the growing child does anything improper the mother recites a little poem telling him of the unwelcome consequences of such a deed. When the child goes to school, the first lessons after the alphabet are given in verse. When the grown up boy takes to learning Sanskrit, one of the first *slokas* to be impressed on his plastic mind is that, "The two great blessings that hallow the horrors of this hard world are tasting the sweet nectar of poetry and keeping good company." Most of the matters that this Sanskrit scholar has to learn are written in verse—the rules of grammar, the aphorisms of metaphysics and logic, the sciences

of botany and medicine, astronomy, chemistry, and physics are all in verse. The Ramayana, the most widely read book in all India, is in verse. At marriage the young couple is united by *mantrams* in verse; and again when after death the human body is consigned to fire or earth it is the Hindu Muse of poetry that has the last words to say.

It was in such a country and in a family that has been in the very forefront of the intellectual renaissance that has been going on in Bengal for more than one hundred years that Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize Winner of 1913, was born on the 6th of May, 1861.

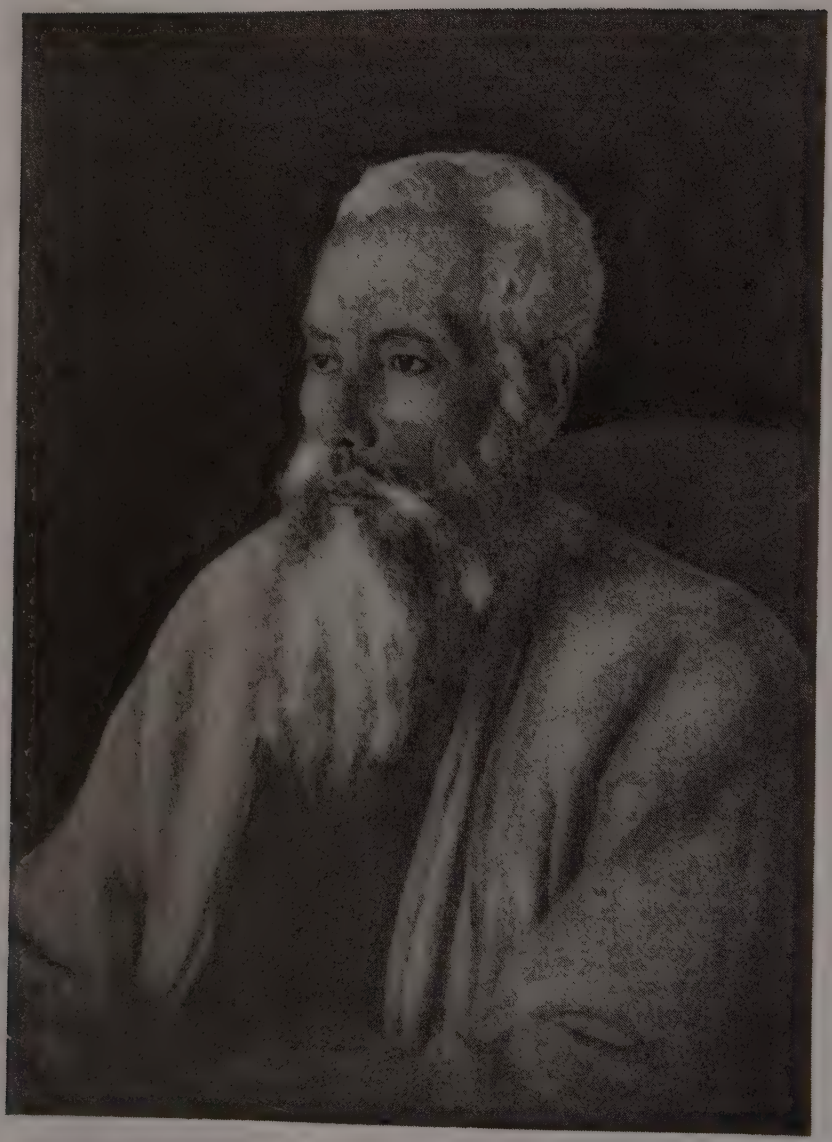
In social and religious reform, in the revival of art and music, and in political and industrial nationalism, the Thakur, Anglicized into Tagore, family has rendered conspicuous service; and has thereby gained the high esteem of the people of India, especially of Bengal. Among the Tagores are counted men like Pro-

sonno Koomar Tagore, a landowner, a lawyer of great reputation, an editor, a writer on legal and educational subjects, founder and president of the British Indian Association; Raja Sir Sourindra Mohun Tagore, undoubtedly one of the highest musical authorities in India, the founder of the Bengal Music School and the Bengal Academy of Music, and author of many volumes on Hindu music and musical instruments; Abanindranath Tagore, a distinguished painter, and an undisputed leader in the Hindu art revival; Maharaja Ramanath Tagore, brother of our poet's grandfather, a political leader and writer; Prince Dwarakanath Tagore, the grandfather of the poet, a landlord, a founder of the Landholders' Society, a philanthropist, and a social reformer, preeminently an agitator against *suttee*.

The most noteworthy of the poet's ancestors is his own father, Debendranath Tagore, who was not a Maharaja (great king). He did not care to be decorated that way. Instead

he was decorated by the people with the title of Maharshi (great sage). Though Debendranath was no intellectual peer of his master, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the father of modern India; yet in devotion to the cause of social and religious reform, in willingness to sacrifice and to suffer for a principle, he was second to none. Son of a Prince, yet moved by a sense of moral duty, for there was no legal or documentary obligation, he refused to tell a single untruthful 'no' and handed over his vast estate to his father's creditors, thus reducing himself to the position of a pauper. No wonder that the people decorated him with the title of Maharshi; and no wonder that the kind-hearted creditors, moved by the heroic honesty of Debendranath, made a compromise and left some property with the youthful seer.

Maharshi Debendranath Tagore was one of India's greatest spiritual leaders. His godliness was contagious. Once a sceptical friend of his came to him and asked: "You talk of



THE MAHARSHI DEBENDRANATH TAGORE,
THE POET'S FATHER

God, ever and again of God! What proof is there that there is a God at all?"

The Maharshi pointed at a light and asked his friend, "Do you know what that is?"

"Light," was the reply.

"How do you know that there is a light there?"

"I see it; it is there and it needs no proof; it is self-evident."

"So is the existence of God," replied the Maharshi. "I see Him within me and without me, in everything and through everything, and it needs no proof, it is self-evident."

The Maharshi in his early youth was very luxury-loving, and he himself tells us in his autobiography the story of his transformation; and we quote it at length, as translated by Mr. Sen, because it has a striking parallelism with the subsequent transformation of Rabindranath: "On the night previous to the day when my grandmother would expire by the River Ganges, I was seated on a mat spread near the tiled

hut; the full moon had risen on the horizon and close by me was the funeral ground. At that time they were singing *Kirtan* songs around my grandmother.

" 'When will that blessed day come,
When I shall leave this mortal body
reciting thy name, O God?'

"A gentle breeze was carrying the sound to my ears; suddenly at that moment a strange emotion passed over my mind. For the time being I became an entirely different man from what I was—I felt a total abhorrence for wealth. The mat on which I sat appeared to be my proper and fit place. The rich carpets and all seemed worthless and of no value to me. I felt a serenity and joy which I had never experienced before. I was only eighteen years old at that time . . . the joy I felt on the funeral ground that day overflowed my soul. . . . No one can experience that joy by filling his head with logical discussions. Who says

there is no God? Here is the evidence of his existence. . . . I could not sleep that night. The reason of my sleeplessness was the ecstasy of soul; as if moonlight had spread itself over my mind for the whole of that night."

After the passing of this great soul Ananda Mohun Bose, the senior wrangler, said: "Son of Dwarakanath Tagore, and the first Secretary, I believe, of the British Indian Association, he might have been a Maharaja long before this. But he chose the better part. The Maharajas die, but the Maharshis live—live in the grateful hearts of unborn generations." No doubt that the Maharshi will live forever and inspire the younger generations with the sublimity of his character.

Rabindranath was born the youngest in a family of seven brothers and three sisters. It is said that born poets are generally handsome. If this is a true generalisation, Rabindranath was no exception. He has long been famous in India both for his poetry and his beauty. In-

deed, his youthful portraits bear a striking resemblance to the best pictures of the poet of Galilee, who wrote not a single verse, but who hallowed the world with the majestic poetry of his life and sayings. The Hindu poet's flowing hair; his broad, unfurrowed forehead; his bright, black, magnetic eyes, chiselled nose, firm but gentle chin, delicate, sensitive hands, his sweet voice, pleasant smile, keen sense of humour, and his innate refinement, make him a man of rare and charming personality. To look at him is to notice the true embodiment of the artist.

The God-intoxicated father of our poet used to travel a good deal; and so could not take personal care of the training of his children all the time. And unfortunately, the rearing of "Rabi," instead of falling into the hands of his mother and the maids, fell into those of the male servants. They were terrible taskmasters, and were most cruel to the child. To simplify the work of watching the child ward, they used

to shut him up in a room, and very often in punishing him, they would make a circle with chalk inside the room and command him not to stir out of the circle. Fortunately for the child, the circle used to be near a window which looked into a garden with its pond, flower-beds and orchards. There he used to watch the kaleidoscopic movements of the people, the animals and the birds. The ducks playing in the water and hunting for food; the people—some gossiping and basking in the sun, others plucking fruits or flowers—were so fascinating to him, that he would even forget the sorrows of his solitary imprisonment.

Though he thus occasionally enjoyed the advantages of neglect, the bondage made his heart long for further freedom. This veiled view of things without whetted his growing appetite for the ultimate union with nature, and through nature with nature's God. It intensified his passionate love for nature so much that when the union came about through freedom, it was

perfect, and, so to say, mutual. Nature took the child to her bosom, and he began to love her with ravishing unrestraint. Separation intensified the bliss of the union of lovers.

This lonesome existence in the locked room naturally made the child pensive; and the seeds of his subsequent mysticism were sown there. In one of his letters, the poet refers to his early days in a passage which may be translated as follows: "I but faintly remember the days of my early childhood. But I do remember that in the mornings, every now and then, a kind of unspeakable joy, without any cause, used to overflow my heart. The whole world seemed to me full of mysteries. Every day, I used to dig the earth with a little bamboo stick, thinking that I might discover one of them. All the beauty, sweetness, and scent of this world, all the movements of the people, the noises in the street, the cry of the kites, the cocoanut trees in the family garden, the banyan tree by the pond, the shadow on the water, the morning

perfume of the blossoms—all these used to make me feel the presence of a dimly recognised being assuming so many forms just to keep me company."

Again, in another place, he thus recalls his childhood days: "Whenever I look back to my childhood days this stands prominent in my memory that the life and the world seemed full of mystery. I felt and thought every day that everywhere there was present something incomprehensible, and there was no certainty of my ever meeting Him at any definite time. It seemed that nature used to close her hands and ask me: 'Tell what I have in my hands.' I never dared to answer, for nothing was impossible to be found there."

The future poet was then about six years old; and one morning he saw one of his elder brothers and his cousin Satya going to school for the first time. He begged to be sent with them, but was refused the privilege. He began to cry and make everybody miserable. His

teacher at home lost his temper and slapped him sharply on the cheek and said: "Some day you will cry more not to go to school than you are crying now to go to school."

Before long, Master Tagore saw this prophecy fulfilled. For soon afterwards, when his turn came to go to school he was happy; but when he was in school he did not enjoy it in the least. To pass from one bondage to another was too much for this nature-loving child. He was transferred from the Oriental Seminary to the Norman School to see if that suited him better. There, too, history repeated itself.

As Goethe did not like his school because his fellow students were rough, so Tagore did not like the Normal School, for the students were anything but pleasant to him, but more than that, he could not learn to like a certain teacher for whom he had a whole-hearted hatred. Tagore thus tells his story: "I quite remember my experience with one of my teachers. He

was wont to use such harsh language that out of contempt I would never answer any of his questions. All the year round I monopolised the last place in his class, and spoke not a word, but thought within myself and sought to solve many great problems of life. I remember one of them: How to defeat an enemy, even though I had no weapons. The solution was that if I might train lions, tigers, and dogs to start the fight, the victory would be easy. . . . Thus one year was spent, and at the annual examination our papers were examined by Srijut Madhusudan Bachaspati. I won the highest grade in the class. My teacher was furious and told the authorities that partiality must have been shown to me—a blockhead. Then under the direct supervision of the superintendent of the school, I was examined a second time, and that time, too, I fortunately kept up my record." First or last in the class Tagore did not like the school at all. So his guardians took him out and sent him to Bengal Academy—an Anglo-Indian

school. Though there was no special cause of complaint against the students or the teachers, still it was to him a school—"a prison house," "a ghastly hospital."

Reluctantly attending school he was, at the same time, studying at home biology, physiology, geography, geometry, history, physics, music, gymnastics, wrestling, and English literature. Of all subjects English was of least interest to him. His Bengali teacher tried his best to make Tagore feel that the English language was very charming. With melodramatic intensity, the teacher would recite some of the most sonorous passages from the famous English poets, to make the child feel the beauty of English verse. But that excited nothing but the mirth of the boy. He would go into hysterics with laughter, and his teacher would blush and give up reciting, and with it all hope of turning his pupil into an English scholar. And yet this boy, forty years later, as the author of "Gitanjali," was to give to the world a new style of

English prose, rich in its singular simplicity, but superb in its rhythmic effect.

These studies in sciences and literature were not, however, all that Tagore was doing. His best thoughts were engrossed in the development of his art. He had already felt within himself an all-devouring poetic impulse. The first breath of poetry touched his childhood body and mind when he was only five years old. After finishing the syllables he had just begun to learn words, and very simple short sentences. One morning he read two short sentences that rhymed:

Jal pawray (water falls)
Pata nawray (leaves tremble)

This mute waterfall and the imagined gentle tremor of the leaves—their idea, their sound, their rhyme, gave the child an ecstatic thrill. To quote the poet's own account of it: "This is the poetry of the primordial poet that touched my heart. When I remember the inexplicable

joy I felt over those words at that time, I realise why rhyming is such an essential factor in verse-making. It is due to the fact that the words do not end with the end of the sound. Their thrill survives their import. The thrill from the rhyme lingers in the ears and vibrates in the mind. That whole day my heart was leaping with joy as water was spraying and the leaves were rustling in my inner consciousness."

It is odd that this sudden birth of poetry in the childish soul sprang from a Bengali phrase which is virtually the same as Swinburne's line, "Lisp of leaves and ripple of rain."

Robert Browning's father, though a bank clerk, was given to versifying, and he was wont to take Robert in his study, make the child sit on his lap and teach him the words that rhymed, and also show him the way to the rhyme-world. Tagore's father was one of the greatest poets that ever lived in the land of Kalidas (India's greatest poet of all ages) though he did not write a single poem. He was a poet of "elo-

quent silences." The silent poet did not, like Browning's father, give his son any lessons in verse-making. But it was the boy poet's nephew, Jyotiprokash, older than himself, that gave him the first lesson in composing poems. One day at noon, when Tagore was only seven years old, Jyotiprokash suddenly took him by the arm, and led him into his study and said:

"You have to write poems."

"How can I do it? I do not know how," replied the future author of "Gan," "Gitanjali," and "The Gardener."

"I shall teach you. I have been reading Shakespeare's Hamlet, and though I am not a poet, I feel from your turn of mind that, with proper training, you may become a great and original poet." A pregnant prophecy indeed! Jyotiprokash took paper and pencil and showed his nephew the way to compose poems in *chaturdas padee payar chanda* (verse of fourteen syllables). This was the first lesson in poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, who has now to his

credit about one hundred volumes of poems, dramas, essays, short-stories and novels. Here is what he himself says of this experience: "Thus far, verse was a thing only to be seen and read in the printed pages. No signs of corrections or alterations, nay, not even a trace of the weakness of the human mind. I was even afraid to think that such a thing could be written by trying. . . . When I realised that by patching together a few words here and a few words there it turned out to be *payar chanda*, and the whole thing blossomed into a poem, I stood disillusioned about the mysterious glory of composing verses. . . . When fear once left me, who could stand in my way? Through the courtesy of one of our clerks I secured a blank book with blue paper in it, drew some uneven lines with my own hand, and began to write poems in huge letters. As a young fawn at the time of its horn-growing strikes at anything and everything, so with the first consciousness of poetic

power, I used to bother anybody and everybody with my poesy. Even my eldest brother was proud of my childhood poems, and did everything in his power to make things miserable for people all around us in his attempt to secure listeners."

In the same normal school where the much-disliked teacher taught, the embryonic poet won the friendship of another teacher, Srijut Satkowri Datta. He was poetically inclined, and discovering the latent possibility of Rabindranath, he often gave him lessons in versification. The teacher would either suggest subjects, or would write the first two lines and ask this boy of nine or ten to finish the stanza. For example the teacher once wrote:

"Rabi Karay jalatan achilaw sabai
Barasha varasha dilaw ar vai nai."

The budding poet added:

"Mingan din haway chilaw saroboray
Ekhan tahara sukhay jalawkrira kawray."

In other words, the teacher wrote:

"Everybody was harassed by the scorching rays of the summer sun, but they all are comforted now by the coming of the rainy season."

The apt pupil completed this idea thus:

"The fishes, all emaciated, dragged on a miserable existence in the pond; now they feel fine and frolic in the water."

Just about this time, the boy's father returned home after a long absence in other parts of India. The Maharshi at once perceived the poetic bent of the boy, and felt that the child was not to blame for his dislike of schools, and he decided to train him in the school of nature. So one day he called the child to his room on the third floor of their palatial home at Jorasanko, Calcutta, and inquired if he would like to go to the Himalayas for a trip. The boy poet was jubilant and shouted the loudest "yes" of his life. To be out of school, and then to go to the Himalayas—what a chance! Young Tagore was glad to get out of school and be-

yond the reach of his teacher's care, and his heart leaped with joy now that he was about to see the mountain world. The Maharshi ordered some excellent suits of clothes for him, and feeling proud in the new clothes, stockings and a gold embroidered satin cap, Rabindranath, with his "blue" blank book and pencil, started for the Himalayas.

The first night out of Calcutta, as he was being carried in a *palanquin* from the railway station to the Bolpur *Shanti Niketan* (Peace Cottage at Bolpur, his father's country home for meditation), he closed his eyes all the way to the bungalow, simply not to see the beauties of nature by the faint light of the falling darkness, that he might take keener delight in the rich landscapes under the morning light.

At Bolpur, Tagore's favourite study, as it had been for some time, were the moral *slokas* of Chanakya and the Ramayana. For hours together, in open air, he would read the Ramayana with deep emotion. Now he would sob

over a sad story, and in a minute he would laugh over something comic, and again he would thrill as he read of feats of strength or adventure. His emotional nature still continues to be the same. Here he used to play a good deal with pebbles and streams, yet he soon filled the "blue" blank book, and felt exceedingly dignified when he was able to secure a copy of Letts' diary to write his childhood poems in. With this "book" in hand he would feel like a poet and write poems sitting with his bare feet outstretched on the green grass under a young cocoanut tree, and in the evenings sing devotional songs for his father.

The precocious poet had a precocious body. He looked older than his years, and on their way from Bolpur to the Himalayas, this fact was the cause of a rather striking incident. Being under twelve years of age Master Tagore was entitled to a half-rate ticket, but in a certain station the ticket collectors doubted from his looks that he could be under twelve and referred the matter to the station master. The

station master came to investigate and he, too, questioned the veracity of the Maharshi. The Maharshi at once handed over a note representing a large sum of money. In a minute the station master brought the change to the train and gave it to the Maharshi. The Maharshi took the silver rupees in his hands, and unhesitatingly threw them all on the stone platform and said: "I never tell lies for anything, much less for money." That incident may help to explain the noble pride and peculiar fineness which characterise Rabindranath's works.

When in the course of time the boy reached the Himalayas, he knew that he had found what his heart was craving for—a wealth of lovely colour and majestic form. Here his father introduced him to the sylvan deities, who, in their turn, unfolded to the boy poet a thousand mysteries of nature. He was not only enthusiastic over the solemn grandeur of the Himalayas, but he was enthusiastic also because his father gave him freedom of move-

ment, except to forbid him the ice-water bath every morning. Tagore used to roam about from mountain to mountain, finding company in the rocks, trees, springs and the unlimited sky overhead, and also visualising the rocks and the trees of different forms into crouching lions and veiled brides, into panoplied soldiers and unclothed *sanyasins*. In fact, under the motherly care of the Himalayas the boy's mind began to expand as does the water in a flood.

During this period of absence from home his father not only taught him English, Sanskrit, Bengali, botany and astronomy, but also gave him lessons in responsibility. He gave an expensive gold watch to the boy to wind it regularly and take care of it. The boy took such excellent care of the watch that it had to be sent to Calcutta for repairs very soon. But his father uttered not a word of displeasure, and handed over the repaired watch to him again. The Maharshi gave him also his cash box and taught him to keep accounts, and never re-

proached him for mistakes. What Tagore says about the training he received from his far-sighted father we commend to parents and educators: "Once in a while, with a stick in hand, I would rove from one mountain to another, but father never showed the least anxiety on my account. I noticed that up to his last days he never stood in the way of my freedom. I have had occasion to do many things against his wish and liking. He could have easily punished me by way of correction, but he never did. He used to wait for the unfolding of the truth within me, for he knew that to accept truth one must learn to love it spontaneously. He knew also that if one travelled far away from truth, still he might, some day, find his way back to it, but if external and artificial punishment compelled one blindly to follow the supposed truth, the way back to the real truth was eternally blocked. . . . He was never afraid that I would make mistakes, he was never perturbed at the prospect of my suffering through mis-

takes. He used to hold lofty ideals before me, but he never lifted the rod of chastisement."

When in the Himalayas, Rabindranath was only a boy of eleven summers, and he had already finished reading the most important books in Bengali. The next year his mother died, and his love for her now went to reinforce his worship of nature. When his father sent him back to Calcutta, his elder brothers at home returned him to school again, against his repeated remonstrances. "After this trip," says Tagore, "to the Himalayas, school became all the more unbearable." But he outwitted his guardians by playing truant. At last he was taken out of school in disgust, and his eldest sister remarked in despair: "We all expected that Rabi would make a mark in the world; but all our hopes have been nipped in the bud by the waywardness of this boy—and now he will be the only unsuccessful man in the family."

Once out of school, he devoted his whole time to artistic pursuits, and at the age of fourteen

wrote "Balmiki-Prativa"—a musical drama which has been published at the beginning of his book of songs, entitled "Gan." In its presentation Tagore took the prominent part of Balmiki and his niece Prativa took the part of the heroine. It may be mentioned, by the way, that Tagore still takes part in his school plays; and it is said by dramatic critics that, had he chosen the stage, he would have been one of the greatest Bengali actors.

His guardians, not satisfied with his fruitless pursuit, decided to send him to London to study for the bar. The Maharshi gave his unwilling consent. The call of the unknown hastened Rabindranath's departure for London. But once there, his spirit again revolted against compulsory study, and within a year he returned to his beloved Bengal.

CHAPTER II

ROMANTIC YOUTH—REALISTIC POEMS

Now a full-fledged young man of eighteen, and brimming with the wine of youth, his passions and emotions ran riot, and he could only see love and romance. The same nature, the same people, the same life; yet everything looked different to him. He was at a loss to know whether it was himself or the world that had changed; and it did not take him long to discover that as he changed first, so the world changed to keep in touch with him. His boyhood mysticism returned to the forests and flowers, the mountains and stars, from where it originally emanated. He was no more a mystic, but an uncompromising realist. And for a time he became an epicure and *bon-vivant;* fashionable dress—the finest of silk robes—delicious dishes, ardent romances, love lyrics and

literary productions, constituted his interests. Tagore himself makes a frank confession on this point in his *Jiban Smriti:* "At the dawn of youth, revolt against nature, so characteristic of that time, also captured my hauteur-filled heart. I had no connection with the usual spiritual current of our family. I was a thing apart. I was only adding fuel to the flaming furnace of my heart. It was indeed a purposeless vagary of youth." Youthful Tagore was never a youthful Byron, but he drank deep of the wine of youth. In his fiftieth year Tagore, looking back on this time of his life, wrote, with a rather strong flavour of mysticism: "The period of my life between the age of sixteen and twenty-three was one of extreme wildness and irregularity. As at the dawn of creation when the demarcation between land and water was not pronounced, huge-bodied and strange-looking amphibious animals used to rove in the primitive forests full of branchless trees, so at

the dawn of youth my inner longings assumed gigantic proportions, and wonderful forms of *chiaroscuro* used to roam in the shade of an unknown, pathless, and endless wilderness. These longings did not know themselves, nor did they know the purpose of their existence. The reason of their not knowing themselves was responsible for their attempt, at every step, to imitate something else. . . .

"As the attempt of a baby's teeth to express themselves causes the fire of fever in the entire system of the baby, and the fever is allayed only when the sharp teeth can bite and take revenge on eatable things, so before the passionate longings of the adolescent heart find adequate expression, and establish relationship with the outer-world, they cause excruciating pain. During that period the untruth of things, feeling the pangs of its separation from truth, used to console itself by excess of license."

What a poetic way of expressing a simple thing! The poet has embodied this idea in the

poem, "The Gleaming Vision of Youth," which has appeared in his own translation in "The Gardener":

"I run as the musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest, mad with his own perfume.
The night is the night of Mid-May, the breeze is the breeze of the south.
I lose my way and I wander, I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.
From my heart comes out and dances the image of my own desire.
The gleaming vision flits on.
I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me and leads me astray.
I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek." *

It was at this time when the "deer was running mad with its own perfume," that Tagore wrote such poems as "Despair of Hope" and "Lamentation of Joy." The latter may be translated thus:

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"With a long-drawn sigh, Joy opened his languorous eyes and said: 'I am all alone in such a moon-kissed night,' and soon all his thoughts bloomed in the song—'I am fearfully alone, I have nobody to call my own—I am all alone, I am all alone.'

"I approached him and gently asked:

" 'Whom do you expect to comfort you, Joy?'

"Joy began to weep and said:

" 'Love, Love, Love, my friend.'

"Joy continued: 'I would fain put an end to my existence and re-incarnate myself as sorrow.'

" 'Why this wild desperation, Joy?' I asked.

" 'Why, I am all alone, all alone, I have nobody to call my own.'

" 'Whom would you be happy to get, whom does your heart pant for, Joy?' I inquired.

"Again tears glistened in his eyes and he said:

" 'Love, Love, my friend, Love alone.' "

Tagore is a profound philosopher, a spiritual and patriotic leader, an historical investigator, a singer and composer, an able editor (having successfully edited four different magazines, *Sadhana*, *Bangadarshan*, *Bharati* and *Tattwa-bodhini*), a far-sighted educator, and an ideal administrator, but he is above all the poet of love. Love flows from his heart, mind and soul in a continuous stream, assuming different forms in its windings from the gross to the spiritual, from the known to the unknown, from the finite to the infinite. He interprets love in all its multiform expressions—the love of mother, of son, husband, wife, lover, beloved, patriot, the Dionysian, the nature-drunk, and the God-frenzied. Each and every one of these he portrays with his characteristic softness of touch that recalls the lyrics of Théophile Gautier, and with the exquisite felicity of Shelley and Keats. His lyrics carry within them emotions that thrill, enrapture and cause every fibre of a human being to ache with joy that almost stops

the throbbing of the heart and draws tears to the eyes.

Expression of love is so natural to him because of the fact that he has passed through all the phases of love and life. Like the prose-poet Tolstoy, he has travelled from the worship of the senses to the quiet of sainthood. He understands the thrills of love, the romantic passion, the gloom of disappointment, the depth of despair, the profundity of quiet, and the ecstatic realisation of "being," "intelligence" and "bliss" (*sat*, *chit*, *anandam*).

The realistic love poems of Tagore's youth shocked many old-fashioned Hindu moralists, who received them with disdain. They were up in arms against Rabindranath, thinking that he was likely to demoralise the youths of India by the sensuousness of his love poems and songs. They were afraid that he was going to introduce the romanticism of the West, of Byron and Shelley, in India, and to depart from the classic severity of Indian literary treatment of

the human passions. But they, in their over-zealousness to preserve for the youths of India the pleasures of Nirvanic bliss, forgot to take notice of the fact that in the writings of the young poet there could not be found anything like the coarse vulgarity of an earlier poet, Bharat Chandra Rai Gunakar, who was widely read by the young Bengalees at that time.

I remember one day in a students' boarding house in India when I was trying to sing to myself one of Mr. Tagore's songs, some of the young men that were present shouted:

"What makes you sing that nautch-song?"

When told that it was one of Rabi Babu's songs they were more than surprised and would not believe it until the printed verses were shown. Then they all changed their mind and confessed that it was quite proper to read or sing anything that Rabi Babu wrote. The song in prose translation reads:

"Hither, O beloved, come hither! step forth

in this pleasure garden of mine and see where my flowers are blowing in beauty. Gentle breathes the west wind, laden with the perfume of the blossoms. Here moonlight glimmers and a silvery stream murmurs down the forest ways.

"Hither, O beloved, come hither! for we shall unfold the depths of our hearts gleaning the beauty of the immortal flowers; and in consuming ecstasy weave garlands each for the other, and watch the stars until they fade in the dawn.

"Beloved, in this joyous garden of ours we shall ever dwell and sing songs in rapturous joy. Here shall our hearts thrill in the mystery of life. Yea, and the days and nights shall pass as Visions of the Lord of Love, and we shall dream together in a languor of everlasting delight."

Again, he sings thus, on the "Pensive Beloved."

"The young girl who sits by the window alone has forgotten to garland the flowers for

her beloved. With her head resting on her hand she seems entirely rapt, while about her the gathered blossoms of the summer lie neglected.

"For the breeze gently blows in to her, whispering softly, caressingly, as she sits by the window in a solemn rapture.

"The clouds fleet in the blue, and the birds flutter in the forest; and the odorous *bakul* blossoms fall intermittently before her eyes, yet she is unregardful.

"But in sweet repose she smiles, for now the tender chords of her heart stir melodiously in the shadowland of dreams."

And again listen to his musings on the "Union."

"Beloved, every part of my being craves for the embrace of yours. My heart is heavy with its own restlessness, and it yearns to repose on your heart.

"My eyes linger on your eyes, and my lips

long to faint upon yours, O my beloved, even unto the ecstasy of death.

"My thirsty heart is crying bitterly for the unveilment of your celestial form.

"My heart is deep in the ocean of being, and I sit by the forbidding shore and moan forever.

"But to-day, beloved, we shall enter the mysteries of existence, our bosoms panting with divine rapture; and thus my entire being shall find its eternal union in thine."

This is the period of Sandhya Sangit—a period when Mr. Tagore was free from the traditions of his family, a period when he was free from the practice of writing poems on paper, for he had been writing poems on a slate. He wrote just as he liked and wiped his poems out whenever he pleased. He did not have to write to please friends, but he wrote to please himself. Let Mr. Tagore speak for himself: "In the history of my life as a poet, this period shall ever remain most memorable to me. From the

standpoint of art the 'Sandhya Sangit' may not be of exceptional value, for the poems in it are unripe. Its language and thought, metre and measure have not been able to express themselves adequately. Its paramount merit lies in the fact that it embodies my freed and unrestrained thoughts. So, though not of any value to the critic, the value of the pleasure is immeasurable to me."

Tagore was not only attacked for the sensuous nature of his poems, but he was attacked as well as being a poor and novel stylist. He was mercilessly attacked for having introduced colloquialism in Bengali. Mr. Tagore replies to his critics thus: "They were wont to call me a poet of broken metre and lisping language—all nebulous. Though these remarks were very unpleasant to me at that time, still they were not without foundation. Truly those poems represented nothing of the cold realities of this world. As I was reared within the walls of absolute restrictions in my early

childhood, I am not at all surprised that I had no better material to entertain my muse with.

"But the critics also characterised my style as a 'fashion' and a 'fad'. I am not at all willing to accept this criticism without a protest. Those elderly men that have splendid eyesight often abuse the young men for using the 'ornaments' of spectacles. The contempt for short-sightedness is easy to bear, but the reproach of feigned short-sightedness seems to be intolerable."

Indeed, he has introduced many delicate new metres, and new forms into Bengali poetic literature that have added to its grace. Like Dante, casting tradition to the winds, he has dared to speak to the people in the language of the people; and as a result he is so clear that men and women, and even children of all walks of life can read or hear and understand him readily. The young Bengali poets of today are all imitating Tagore. So in the present-day poetry there is to be found an im-

print, quite often a very poor one, of Tagore's style. There is something about Tagore's style and thought which permits a critic to detect the author in the first line or two of a poem. Tagore is unique in his own way, and this "something" is inimitable.

All of a sudden amid showers of adverse criticism Tagore received, quite accidentally, an inspiration, an impetus that sustained his spirit and spurred him on to achieve higher heights and nobler flight in the realm of poetry. As the meeting of Nietzsche with Wagner was a source of inspiration to the former and of pleasure to the latter; so the meeting of Rabindranath with Bankim Chandra Chattopadhya, the greatest of all Bengali novelists, was a source of inspiration and encouragement to the young poet, and of pleasure to the novelist. They met at a wedding party at the home of Romesh Chandra Dutt, the statesman, historian, and novelist. Mr. Dutt, to do homage to the greatest literary genius of Bengal, put a garland of flowers

round this prose poet's neck. Chattopadhya immediately took the garland off and decorated Rabindranath with it, saying, "This garland is due to him—have you read his 'Sandhya Sangit'?" Romesh Chandra replied in the negative, but Bankim Chandra lauded to the skies some of the poems in the book. Such unstinted praise from such a high source almost drew tears of joy to the eyes of Rabindranath, and made him forget all the pains of the darts of unpleasant criticism from the general public. This signal honour meant much more to him than the Nobel Prize means to him now.

Like other men, Tagore was created with a dual nature,—part sensuous and part spiritual. His youthful mind was oscillating between the twin currents. Even though the sensuous was the uppermost for a time, the other never deserted him altogether. There was always that ineffable feeling of inherited spirituality. The two tried to harmonise themselves and the story of the struggle between the sensuous and the

spiritual within him found the fullest expression in his most exquisite love poem—"The Beloved at Night and in the Morning," which in our translation necessarily loses much of its original beauty.

I

"Last night we were seated in a pleasure garden in enchanting surroundings. The darkness of the night was blanched with moonbeams, and a soft wind robbed the flowers of their fragrance.

"I held before your mouth the brimming cup of the wine of youth. You looked at my eyes and slowly took the cup in your hand, and your kiss-charged lips blossomed into a faint but eloquent smile and sipped the cup of youth's wine; and we both were intoxicated with love.

"I took off your veil with my hands, trembling with an ecstatic nervousness, and then placed your dear hands, tender as the lotus leaves, next to my heart. Your eyes were half

closed with the languor of love and you spoke not a word. I unbound your hair and slowly hid your radiant face within my heart.

"Beloved! In the moon-kissed night, with smiling consent, you submitted to all the tyrannies of our first union of love."

II

"In this peaceful morning mellowed by pure and fragrant air, I see you dressed in white after your morning bath, as you walk swan-like along the lonely Ganges. A flower-basket is hanging from your left hand as you pluck flowers with the other. I hear the distant morning music of the temple, in this pure and fragrant morning by the lonely river Ganges.

"Goddess! a fresh vermilion line illumines the parting of your hair, and a *sanka* bracelet adorns your left wrist. Oh, in what a transfigured form you appear to me this morning! Last night you were the sweet-heart of my

pleasure garden, and this morning you appear as my goddess divine.

"In this pure and fragrant morning by the lonely river Ganges, I look at you from afar with my head bowed in reverent awe."

CHAPTER III

TRANSFORMATION—PRACTICAL IDEALISM—DEVOTIONAL POEMS

TAGORE did not, however, have to struggle very long to attain the highest truth. When the time was ripe, the illumination came of itself one morning, and the Divine Beloved revealed himself quite unexpectedly and in a singular way. The illumination came as it did to his father or to St. Francis of Assisi, and the story may be told in the poet's own beautiful English: "It was morning, I was watching the sunrise in Free School street. A veil was suddenly drawn, and everything I saw became luminous. The whole scene was one perfect music, one marvellous rhythm. The houses in the street, the children playing, all seemed part of one luminous whole—inexpressibly glorious. The vision went on for seven or eight days.

Every one, even those who bored me, seemed to lose their outer barrier of personality; and I was full of gladness, full of love, for every person and every tiniest thing. . . . That morning in the Free School street was one of the first things that gave me the inner vision, and I have tried to explain it in my poems. I have felt ever since that this is my goal in life: to explain the fulness of life, in its beauty, as perfection."

The whole day a poem flowed out spontaneously from his discovered self. This, perhaps, is the most significant work of Tagore. The poem—*Nirjharer Sapna Bhanga* (Fountain Awakened from its Dream) though not technically of the highest order, yet in its rugged beauty and in the revelation of the inner emotions of the poet on that historic day, is a masterpiece. It is also significant in that it throws light on the development of the poetry and personality of Tagore. In reading the following striking passages from

it, one should remember that "Rabi"—the shortened form of the poet's name—means "the sun":

"I do not know how my life after all these years could have such an awakening to-day. Neither do I know how in the morning the true rays of the sun (Rabi) could have entered my heart or the music of the morning bird could have penetrated into the very depth of the darkness of my heart's core.

"Now that my whole being is once awakened, I cannot control the desires and longings of my heart. Look! the whole world is trembling to its very foundation, the hills and the mountains are falling in confusion; and the foam-crested waves are swelling in anger as if to tear out the heart of this earth to wreak vengeance for its restricted liberty. The ocean, rendered boisterously jubilant by the touch of the rays of the morning sun, desires to engulf the world in its pursuit for self-fulfilment.

"Oh, cruel Providence! why hast Thou put even oceans under restraint?"

. . . . . .

"I—the liberated I—shall shower tenderness all around me. With dishevelled hair and flowers in my hands, and with a radiance that will dim the sun, I shall be borne on the wings of rainbows and travel from mountain to mountain and from planet to planet; or I shall assume the form of rivers and thus flow from one country to another to sing my message, my song.

"Something inexplicable has happened, my whole being is aching with an awakening, and I hear at a distance the call of the Great Ocean. Yes, it calls! it calls! the Great Ocean calls! And yet, and yet—at this moment, why all these walls around me! Still my heart hears the call that says:

"'Who wishes to come? Who wishes to come? Those that wish to come after breaking the stone walls of bondage, after bedewing the hard world with love, after washing the

forests into new green, after setting the flowers abloom; after comforting the broken heart of the world with the last breath of your life—if then any soul wishes to enter my life, then come, come.'

"I come, I come—where is He, and where is His country? I do not care, I shall pour forth the last drop of the water of my life in this world, and I shall sing tender songs; and my anxiety-stricken heart shall mingle its life with the life of the distant Ocean. Thus my song shall end.

"But bondage again, bondage all around me! What a terrible prison is this! Let blows fall upon blows and thus break, break the prison; for the morning birds have sung a strange song and the true rays of the sun have entered my heart to-day."

In the original, this poem has something of the Miltonic force which is usually so lacking in the writings of Tagore, but which invig-

orates the writings of the poets like Madhusudan Datta, Nabin Chandra Sen and Dwijendra Lal Roy.

Though Tagore's subsequent visit to the Himalayas failed to emphasise the vision, still it was not altogether lost in him. It transformed his entire life as did the vision on the banks of the Ganges transform the life of his father. It was a change, a crisis, yes, a convalescence. Tagore came out of it a better man, a deeper thinker, and a universal poet.

When the ardour of the new awakening cooled a little, Tagore graphically recorded the history of this period of his life in his poem—"The Reunion":

"Mother nature! in my childhood days I used to play in thy affectionate lap and be happy. Then something happened and I went astray and strayed farthest away from you, only to enter and lose my way in the boundless wilderness of my youthful heart. There is no sun,

no moon, no planet, and certainly no stars. It is enveloped in Cimmerian darkness, and confusion is the order of the place; and therein I was the only benighted wayfarer.

"I left you behind, dear nature! and entered the wilderness to spend many, many days of discomfort and unrest.

"But now, a single bird has shown me the way out of the wilderness to the shore of the endless ocean of bliss.

"The flowers blossom, the birds fly again, and the sky is resonant with the music of the spheres. The waves of life rise and fall on all sides as the sunbeams dance on them.

"The gentle breeze blows and light smiles on all sides, and the boundless sky watches over them all. I look again all around me to see the marvellous manifestation of nature.

"Some come near me, some call me 'friend,' and others want to play with me. Some smile, others sing; some come, others go, oh, what a panorama of inexpressible joy!

"I understand quite well, mother nature, that after such a long time you have again discovered me, your lost child. That is why you have taken me in your affectionate embrace, and have begun to sing your imposing music, rich in harmony and melody. That is why the gentle zephyr rushes towards me and embraces me repeatedly; that is why the sky in its exuberance of joy showers the very morning itself on my head; that is why the clouds from the eastern gate of the horizon gaze on my face so intently; that, again, is why the entire universe is beckoning me again and again to hide my head in her bosom, hers alone."

Whenever they experience anything supernatural, the Hindus are wont to turn ascetic. Prince Gautama heard the call, left the world and all that it held for him, became an ascetic, and afterwards the Buddha; Chaitanya Dev heard the call, left his dear mother, wife and child to gain salvation by renouncing the world.

But Rabindranath heard the call and clung to the world more closely than ever, and his attachment for the world ripened into selfless love for the oppressed and suffering millions of famine-stricken India. He sings in Gitanjali:

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will hear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love." *

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The contrast between the idea of renunciation and the *non-dualistic* philosophy he most exquisitely brings out in a poem which he thus translates:

"At midnight the would-be ascetic announced:

'This is the time to give up my home and seek for God. Ah, who has held me so long in delusion here?'

God whispered, 'I', but the ears of the man were stopped.

With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed.

The man said, 'Who are ye that have fooled me so long?'

The voice said again, 'They are God,' but he heard it not.

The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.

God commanded, 'Stop, fool, leave not thy home,' but still he heard not.

God sighed and complained, 'Why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me?' " *

Compare with this these lines of Walt Whitman, the American Vedantist:—

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is."

So instead of being an ascetic Tagore became a pragmatist, for he held, as he holds today, that the "greater cannot be great without the small, the infinite is only the fullest expression of the finite, and that there is no liberation without love. Wherever love is there dwells the Infinite within the finite." What Henry James says of Browning may be said of Tagore with more appropriateness: "The meeting point of God and man is love. Love, in other words, is, for the poet, the supreme

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principle both of morality and religion. Love, once for all, solves that contradiction between them, which, both in theory and in practice, has embarrassed the world for so many ages. Love is the sublimest conception attainable by man; a life inspired by it is the most perfect form of goodness he can conceive; therefore, love is, at the same moment, man's moral ideal, and the very essence of Godhood. A life actuated by love is divine, whatever other limitations it may have. Such is the perfection and glory of this emotion, when it has been translated into a self-conscious motive and become the energy of an intelligent will, that it lifts him who owns it to the sublimest heights of being.

" 'For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless God
Amid his world, I will dare to say.' "

Holding that the soul finds its fullest expression in work well done, for, as Carlyle says:

"All true work is religion," he thus writes in Sadhana: "It is only when we wholly submit to the bonds of truth that we fully gain the joy of freedom. And how? As does the string that is bound to the harp. When the harp is truly strung, when there is not the slightest laxity in the strength of the bond, then only does music result; and the string transcending itself in its melody finds at every chord its true freedom. It is because it is bound by such hard and fast rules on the one side that it can find this range of freedom in music on the other." *

Compare this with what he wrote about twenty years ago in a letter: "The more I take varied work on my hands, the more I learn to love and respect work. That work was a great thing, I knew only as a copy-book maxim. Now I am realising in life that man's true fulfilment is in his work. It is through work that I know things and people, and stand face to face with the world of action. I have landed

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in that realm where men meet, even though they live far apart. I am realising in life the vast liberality of the sphere of action and with it the union of man in a chain of mutual helpfulness. The superb grandeur of work is this: that for the sake of duty one has to sacrifice his personal joys and sorrows. I remember one day while I was living at Sajadpur our butler was late in getting to his work in the morning and I rebuked him for that. He saluted me as usual and said in a mournful accent: 'My eight-year-old daughter died last night'; and he at once began his morning duty. In the hard field of duty there is not even time for sorrow. What good would it do even if we had the time? If duty can take one's mind away from *Maya* and lead him onward to a higher plane of thought, good and well. . . .

"In this world a bridge of hard stone is arching over joys and sorrows, and over it the express train of duty loaded with myriads of men and women are following its iron rail with

lightning rapidity. Except at appointed stations, it never stops anywhere for anybody. In the cruelty of duty lies the terrible consolation of man."

His father, the Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, was busy solving the problems of the next world, but the poet Tagore, all through his life of varied experiences, has striven to help evolve this world to the status of heaven—to unite heaven and earth. He loves the world as passionately as a miser loves money. He even doubts the ability of heaven to supply the blessings of life which this dear earth provides her children with. He thus expresses his love for the world: "Oh, how I love this world that is lying so quietly! I feel like hugging it with all its trees and flowers, rivers and plains, noise and quiet, mornings and evenings. I often wonder if heaven itself could give us all the blessings we are enjoying in this world. How could heaven give us anything like this, the treasure of such human beings in the mak-

ing, so full of tenderness, weakness and love?

"This earth-mother of ours has carried us in her arms, and presented us with her fields full of golden crops, her affectionate rivers and rivulets, her homesteads, where smiles of joy and tears of sorrow mingle to make them perfectly lovely. . . .

"Oh, how I love this world! I see on her forehead the furrows of pathos, and she seems to whisper in my ear: 'I am the daughter of Divinity, but I have not his power; I love, but I cannot protect; I can begin but never complete; I give birth, but cannot rescue from the hands of death.' This helplessness, this impotency, this incompleteness, and this consuming anxiety inseparable from love make me jealous of heaven, and I love the world all the more."

And again, he thus speaks of his more intimate relationship with the world: "This world is always new to me. I feel as if we are like friends who have loved each other through

many births and re-births. Our friendship is deep-seated and far-reaching. I well remember those days of the primordial past, when this new-born earth first lifted its head from above the deep and began to worship the young sun overhead, and I, in exuberance of this earth's energy, came into this new planet as a budding tree. There was no other animate thing in the entire world. The vast ocean was restless and, like a love-frenzied mother, every now and then was wont to devour the whole body of the newly-born earth-babe with a passionate embrace. I, then, used to drink the sun's rays to my heart's content, and like a baby, my whole body laughed in joy, but knew not why; and like a tree with a thousand roots, used to suckle at the breast of this my dear earth-mother. My internal joy blossomed to the outside world as flowers and foliage. The shadow of the clouds in the sky used to touch these flowers and the buds with the gentle touch of a loving friend. Many a time after that, in

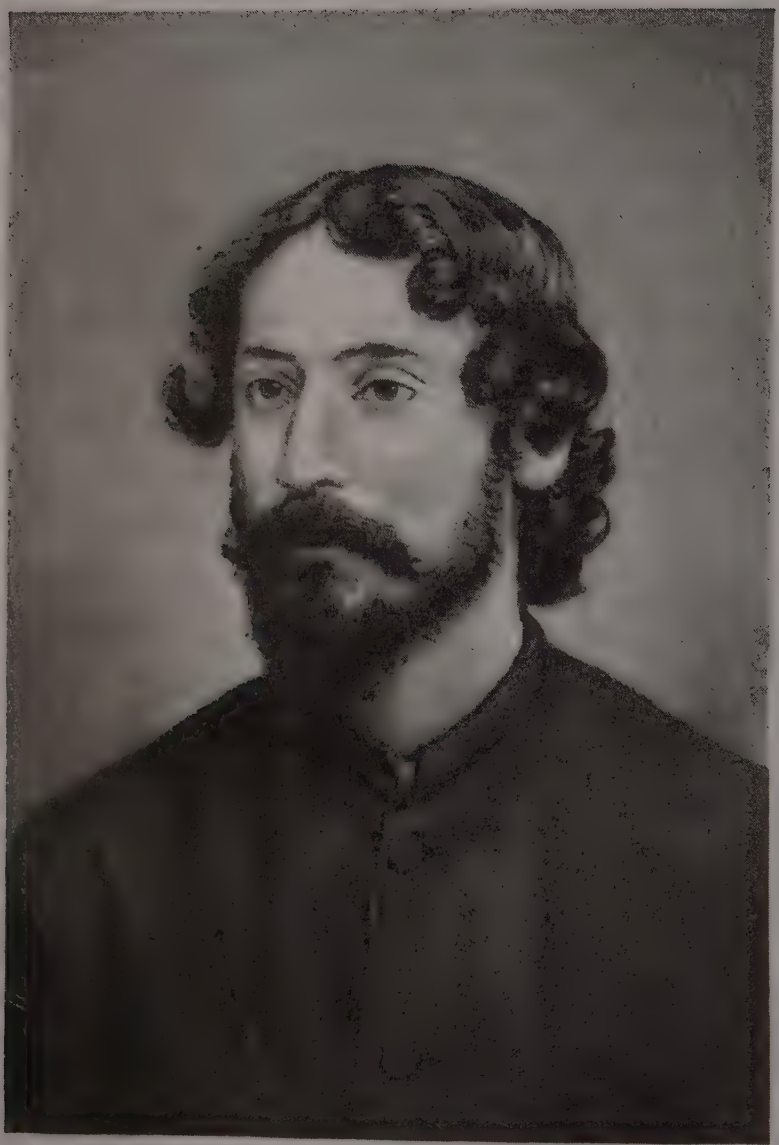
new ages, I have been incarnated on this earth. When we two look at each other, the faithful memories of the dim past crowd our minds. . . . She loves me like her son, but now that she has so many sons and daughters she cannot bestow her entire time and affection on me alone, as she used to do when I was the only child in the family; but I still kiss her feet and embrace her as ever."

That is why he loves to "plunge in quietness, as the music of the river, the gentle breeze of the evening, the splendour of the starry firmament help his fancy to weave garlands of rapturous joy, and he thus spends hours together, wrapped within himself rather lost in the universe."

At the time of the vision which helped him to find himself, Tagore was about thirty years old. With the change in the man, changed the tone of his poems. Now, filled to the brim with the love of God, and looking upon this universe as the visible expression of God's

love, he touches nothing, he writes nothing, that he does not saturate with the thought of divine love, of spiritual life, and of eternal beauty. The sun, the moon, the stars in heaven, and the trees and flowers on earth speak a language of love for the Supreme Being whose handiwork they are. William Butler Yeats speaks of the spirituality of the songs in the Gitanjali in these words: "In all his poems there is one single theme: the love of God. When I tried to find anything western which might compare with the works of Tagore, I thought of 'The Imitation of Christ,' by Thomas à Kempis. It is like, yet between the work of the two men there is a world of difference. Thomas à Kempis was obsessed by the thought of sin; he wrote in terrible imagery. Mr. Tagore has as little thought of sin as a child playing with a top. His poems have stirred my blood as nothing has for years."

It is after this that his career as a true artist began. Things of permanent nature began to



RABINDRANATH TAGORE, AGE THIRTY.

pour out from his mind and pen with perfect spontaneity. His Brabmo Sangits (religious songs) became deeper in thought and more universal in character—songs that every morning, noon and night draw tears from the eyes of many devotees. They are songs not so much to sing as to feel. Many a soul is suffused with devotional emotion by reciting a single passage from any one of them. To translate three from the most popular of his Brahmo songs:

I

"My God! why does my benumbed soul grovel in the dust all the time, and not awake to the fullest consciousness of its potentiality?

"Myriads of watchful stars are wide awake in the dark-blue of the night. The birds sing sweet, and flowers blow fragrant in the forest, and lo! how the moon smiles in joy. And yet, and yet, why does not thy grace dawn upon my soul? why do I not see your face lit with love divine?

"I receive the unsolicited love of mother and the blessings of a home sweetened by the presence of dear ones. You are ever near me in so many forms, and still why does my soul crave to stray far away from you?"

II

"I can see you just once in a while. Why can I not see you all the time? Why do the clouds of passions and idle desires in my heart obscure the full view of your face divine?

"When I catch a fleeting glance of you, I tremble lest I lose you again; but—and this is strange—to my sorrow you pass away instantly, even as you appeared, like the lightning.

"Tell me, Beloved, what can I do to keep you permanently before my eyes—yes, just before my eyes, for how can I have so much love as to hold you in my heart?

"If you so command, I will sacrifice everything for the sake of your blessed self."

III

"I have made you the polar star of my existence, never again can I lose my way in the voyage of life.

"Wherever I go you are always there to shower your beneficence all around me. Your face is ever present before my mind's eyes. I almost lose my mind, if I lose sight of you even for a moment.

"Whenever my heart is about to go astray, just a glance of you makes it feel ashamed of itself."

In the religious songs of the Gitanjali, Tagore reaches the summit of his lyric and spiritual genius, and it is necessary to incorporate here at least one or two of them. These songs have moved not only the heart of Yeats, but the warm hearts of the people of chilly Sweden, and has given the Bengalee poet the status of a world poet. These songs from a

"heathen" poet are to-day being read in Christian lands from pulpits, and sung by children in Sunday schools, and by artists in concerts.

Without placing these poems above the writings of Dante and St. John of the Cross, Shelley and Swinburne, Wordsworth, Milton, and the whole gamut of poets of insular and continental Europe, as an English woman novelist has been pleased to do, it may safely be asserted that the lyrics of the Gitanjali are some of the rarest treasures of poetic and mystic literature of the world. Here follow two of such poems. In the first he thus addresses God as a passer-by:

"In the deep shadows of the rainy July, with secret steps, thou walkest, silent as night, eluding all watchers.

"To-day the morning has closed its eyes, heedless of the insistent calls of the loud east wind, and a thick veil has been drawn over the ever-wakeful blue sky.

"The woodlands have hushed their songs, and

doors are all shut at every house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this deserted street. Oh, my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house—do not pass by like a dream." *

In the second he dwells on the mysteries of the final home of the soul:

"Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.

"O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

"There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

"And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

"But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless

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white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word." *

Though Tagore's religious songs are superb in form and thought, yet it must be confessed that they are not the religious songs of the masses of Bengal. The masses have no comprehension of the Brahmo Somaj—the religious Unitarians of Hindusthan. It is the songs of Ramprosad, the Kirtans of the Vaishnavas, and the *padabalis* of the Vaishnava poets, that move the masses as nothing else can do. The masses of Bengal sing of Radha, Krishna, and Kali. Just "You" or "Thee" or "Brahma" does not have any tangible effect on the minds of the people at large. One might sing Tagore's religious songs to a Bengali farmer, either a *Vaishnava* or *shakta*, but he would listen unmoved; and might even ask the singer to stop if he happened to detect it to be a Brahmo song. The orthodox hatred for Brahmo disregard for Hindu mythology is very intense. But a song

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on Radha, or Krishna or Kali will send him into ecstasies. The popular mind seeks to shun the abstract. It wants visible imagery of God. It cannot love what even the imagination of poets cannot comprehend.

Dinesh Chandra Sen tells us in his book on Bengali literature how once he heard a seventy-year-old Vaishnava devotee sing the following song of Chandi Das:

"Dark is the night and thick are the clouds.
How could you, my beloved, come by the path
in such a night?
There in the garden, I see him standing in
the rain.
My heart breaks at the sight thereof."

"I say to you, my maidens, for many virtues of mine, my love has graciously come here to meet me.

"Within the house are the elders, and my sister-in-law is very cruel; I could not immediately run out to meet him.

"Alas, what anguish and pain have I not caused him by beckoning him to come!

"When I see how earnestly he loves me, fain would I bear the load of infamy on my head and set fire to my house.

"He takes as happiness all the troubles he has suffered for my sake; and he is only sorry, if he sees me sad."

Mr. Sen says: "While the old man was singing, I suddenly heard his voice become choked with tears, and he could not proceed any more. On his coming to himself after this display of feeling, I asked him the cause of his tears. He said it was the song. The song, I said, described an ordinary love-affair, and where could be the pathos in it that gave occasion for such an outburst of feeling in an old man?

"He explained that he did not consider it an ordinary love-song. Here is his interpretation:

" 'I am full of sins. My soul is covered with darkness. In deep distress I beckoned Him to come to me. The merciful God came. I found him waiting for me at the gate of my house. It cannot be any pleasure to Him to come to a great sinner like me,—the path is foul, but by supreme good fortune the merciful God took it. The world I live in has left no door open for Him. Relations and friends laugh, or even are hostile, but remembering His great mercy what can a sinner do, except desert his house and all, court any abuse of the world, and turn a *Sanyasin!* The thought of his mercy choked my voice—Oh, dark is the night, and thick are the clouds, how could you, my beloved, come by the path? But he exposes himself to the rain because in order to help the sinner He is ready to suffer.' "

And again, the different songs telling the stories of love between Radha and Krishna as are shown in the following quotation from Mr. Sen's book, move the masses:

"Krishna comes in the guise of a woman-physician and touches her hand to feel the pulse. He comes as a magician and the women of the village assemble behind the screens to witness his feats. His labours are rewarded by one stolen glance of Radha's face. He comes to her as a barber-wife and obtains a minute's interview; as a nun, and on the pretext of giving a blessing, whispers a word of love to her. Radha also goes to meet him in disguise of a shepherd boy."

Whether the orthodox Bengalees admire Tagore's religious poems or not, it admits of no doubt that they are superb in their transparent beauty. Now a chance presented itself to the poet to take a pleasant revenge on his father. Many years before this the Maharshi read one of the boyhood religious songs of his son and laughed. Tagore remembered that all these years. All of a sudden, the Maharshi called Rabindranath to the city where he was residing

at that time, just to hear a particular song, freshly composed, from the mouth of its author. When asked, young Tagore began to sing:

"Nawyawn tomarah payna dekhitay,
Tumi rawyacho nawyawnay nawyawnay!
Hridawai tomarah payna janitay,
Hridaway rawyacho gopawnay!" etc.

The song, in part, translates as follows:

"My eyes cannot see you, yet you are always before my eyes. My mind cannot comprehend you, yet in silence you make me feel your presence all the time.

"Like that of a madman, my mind rushes hither and yon, charged with the worldly longings of my heart. But I can see your loving eyes ever keeping watchful vigilance on me in sleep or in dream.

"The friendless and the forlorn can always feel sure of yourself, and of your love. Even the homeless vagabond has the consolation of

having his home in the one you have built for us all."

. . . . . .

"I know that I cannot live without you, for you are the life of my life. The more I get of you, the more I want; the more I know about you, the less I know of you.

"But I know that in age after age and in recurring births you will always stand by me; for there is nothing to stand between you and me—you and I are one."

The song over, the Maharshi said with a significant tremor in his voice: "Unfortunately for the country, our English rulers do not appreciate or encourage our arts, our industries and our culture, but here is an humble recognition of your genius by your father; the song is superb." And the old man handed him a slip of paper. The poet-singer opened it to find a check for 500 rupees (about $165.00) for a poem of twenty-four lines. This was Tagore's first "Nobel Prize" for poetry.

CHAPTER IV

AT SILAIDAH

DWIJENDRANATH TAGORE, the eldest brother of Rabindranath, is a philosopher. He has no idea of business or the business world. He, however, was sent to manage the country estate of the Maharshi. No sooner had he reached his place of business than he noticed the poverty of the farmers, many of whom came to him and told the story of their sorrow. The philosopher-manager was moved, and he at once telegraphed to his father to send money to help the poor farmers. The Maharshi thought that a good manager should manage things from within in such a way that things would be satisfactory to both the *zamindar* and the *rayat*. So, the philosopher was called back, and the Maharshi decided to send his youngest son, whom he trained to keep accounts during his

boyhood trip to the Himalayas, to take charge of the management of the family *Zamindary* in Bengal villages. The young poet accepted the offer, and for years, off and on, lived in a house-boat on the Padma and its branches in closest touch with nature. He observed, studied, loved and caressed nature in all its aspects. In two different letters from Silaidah, he thus plainly speaks of his life in the house-boat and of his love for the Padma River:

"I am in my house-boat now. Here I am the supreme master of myself and of my time. The boat is like my old dressing-gown—it is so comfortable. Here I think as I like, weave my fancies according to my own patterns, read and write as much as I like. I sit on a chair and place my legs on a table, and take a mental plunge in the sky-embroidered and light-diffused lazy days. . . . Truly, I love this Padma River very dearly, it is so wild, so undomesticated. I feel like riding on its back and patting it caressingly on its neck. . . . I no

more like to take a part before the footlights of the stage of publicity. I rather feel like doing my duty in silent solitude amid these transparent days that we have here. . . . Here man is insignificant, but nature great and imposing. The things we see around us are of such a nature that one cannot create to-day, mend to-morrow and throw them off the day after. These things stand permanent, amidst birth and death, action and inaction, change and changelessness. When I come to the countryside I do not look upon man as anything separate from nature. Just as rivers flow by through many strange lands, similarly the current of humanity, too, is incessantly following its zig-zag path through dense forests, lonely meadows, and crowded cities, always accompanied by its divine music. It is not quite right to make the river sing, 'Man may come, man may go, but I go on forever'—for man, too, is going on forever with his thousand branches and tributaries. He has his one end attached to the root of birth, and the other

to the ocean of death—both enveloped in the mysterious darkness; and between these two extremes lie life, labour and love."

And again, Tagore writes: "Before entering on a journey on the Padma, I feel nervous lest she, on account of constant company, look unattractive to me. But the moment I float on the river, all my apprehensions vanish into nothingness. The *kul kul* noise of the ripples, the gentle tremor of the boat, the light-bathed sky, the vast expanse of soft blue water, the fresh foliage of trees along the banks of the river—an *ensemble* of colour, music, dance and beauty lend radiance to the superb melody of nature. All these awaken a keen interest and a deep delight in my mind."

The profound influence of this daughter of the Ganges and the vast plains that stretch away from its banks, is reflected in all his subsequent writings. Here he imbibed the spirit which made him clothe his "golden Bengal" in an idealistic garb, and gave him a deeper sense

of the presence of the Infinite in the basic realities of life. In one of his letters he thus speaks of his love for Bengal: "Every day after taking my evening bath I take a long walk along the river. Then I make a bed on my jolly boat, and lie down flat on my back in the silent darkness of the evening, and ask myself: 'Shall I again be able to be born under such starry skies? Shall I ever again in another life, be able to lie down this way on a jolly boat on the river Gorai in our "golden Bengal"?' I am always afraid that I may never have a chance to enjoy such an evening again. I may be born in different environments and with a different turn of mind altogether. I may get such an evening, but the evening may not lie so affectionately on my breast, covering me with her dark dishevelled hair. But I am afraid most of all that I may be born in Europe. For there, I shall not be able to lie down this way with my whole body and soul looking upward. There I may have to drudge in a factory, in a bank or in a

parliament. As the streets in the European cities are made of hard stone, brick and mortar, to be made fit for commerce and transportation, so the human heart becomes hardened and best suited for business. In the hard pavement of their heart there is not the slightest opening for a tender tendril, or a single blade of useless grass to grow. Everything is made bare and strong. I think that in comparison to that, this kind of fanciful, lazy, sky-filled and self-searching mind is not a jot the less glorious or praiseworthy."

Thus Tagore sings his superb song—"Golden Bengal"—which is being sung with renewed fervour ever since the inauguration of the new nationalist movement in India:

"I love you, my golden Bengal, for your sky and your air always play on the harp of my heart.

"In the spring, your mango groves breathe forth the maddening perfume of the blossoms,

and in the autumn your harvest fields smile in the bliss of fruition. Mother darling! O, how inexpressibly sweet is your love which has clothed the banks of rivers, and the shades of trees in such a superb attire. Mother, nothing sounds sweeter in my ears than the woods that are sanctified by the touch of the breath of your lips. And my eyes begin to float in tears when I notice the least trace of pathos on your face. I have enjoyed my childhood days in your playhouse, and now I feel fortunate whenever I touch a particle of your dust.

"At dusk when the lamps are lit in the homes, I leave my toils and games, and rush to your loving lap. In the village where cattle graze gently in the fields on the way to the ferry, where birds sing joyously on trees—trees that cast their shadows to soothe the burning heat of the day, and where the courtyards are radiant with the sheaves of harvested rice, I pass the days of my life, feeling fraternal with your cowherds and peasants.

"Mother, reverence bows my head to be hallowed by the dust of your feet, which I hold more precious than the dust of diamonds and emeralds; and I am prepared to make an offering of all I have at thy feet."

This is the Bengali counterpart of,

"I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above," etc.

In the farming communities, he came in touch with the illiterate but intelligent, high-thinking and devout Indian peasants, and was inspired by their simplicity of spirit and devotional idealism. In return, he looked after their material needs, and administered justice "tempered with mercy." To help them in sickness, he privately took up the study of harmless homeopathy, and at any hour of the day or night would visit the sick and give medicine.

But the tax-created poverty and absolute helplessness of the farmers made him uneasy in his waking hours and haunted him in his dreams. Tagore thus expresses his sorrow for the farmer: "I feel a heart-felt sorrow when I look at the Indian farmers. They are so helpless, as if they were babies of mother earth. They suffer from hunger unless she feeds them with her own hands. When her breast is dry, they just cry; and again if they get a little to eat, they forget all about their past sorrows in a moment. I do not exactly know whether the socialist's demand for the distribution of wealth is possible or not. But if it is absolutely impracticable, then God's laws must be exceedingly cruel, and men hopelessly unfortunate. If sorrow has to remain in this world, let it stay, but there must be some glimpses of possibilities by which the higher nature of man may strive and hope for the amelioration of such conditions. They state a very cruel theory who claim that it is a dream to think of the possibility of distributing the

bare necessaries of life amongst mankind, and that some men are predestined to starve without any way out of it. It is a cruel theory to say the least."

In a letter written on July 4, 1893, from his house-boat, he says: "There is a flood here. The rayats are carrying home unripe rice in their boats. I hear their sighs and tales of sorrow. The rice fields were all but ripe when this disaster befell them. The unhappy farmers only hope that there may be a few good grains in the sheaves.

"In the work of the universe, mercy there must be somewhere, otherwise how could we get it? But it is pretty difficult to locate it. The complaints of thousands of innocent and unfortunate men and women are reaching no high tribunal. The rain is falling just as it pleases, the river is flowing just as it wishes, no one can petition and secure redress from nature. We have to console our minds by saying that the problem is beyond comprehension—but we have

to realise just the same that there is mercy and justice in inscrutable laws of Providence."

Twenty years later, in the summer of 1913, lecturing in London on the Problem of Evil, Tagore thus offered a solution to the riddle of evil in the world: "We exaggerate the importance of evil by imagining it at a standstill. Could we collect the statistics of the immense amount of death and putrefaction happening every moment in this earth, they would appal us. But evil is ever moving; with all its incalculable immensity it does not effectually clog the current of our life; and we find that the earth, water, and air remain sweet and pure for living beings. All statistics consist of our attempts to represent statically what is in motion; and in the process things assume a weight in our mind which they have not in reality. . . . Within us we have a hope which always walks in front of our present narrow experience; it is the undying faith in the infinite in us; it will never accept any of our disabilities as a perma-

nent fact; it sets no limit to its own scope; it dares to assert that man has oneness with God. . . . Evil cannot altogether arrest the course of life on the highway and rob it of its possessions. For the evil has to pass on, it has to grow into good; it cannot stand and give battle to the All. If the least evil could stop anywhere indefinitely, it would sink deep and cut into the very roots of existence. . . .

"Man's freedom is never in being saved troubles, but it is the freedom to take trouble for its own good, to make the trouble an element in his joy. It can be made so only when we realise that our individual self is not the highest meaning of our being, that in us we have the world-man who is immortal, who is not afraid of death or sufferings, and who looks upon pain as only the other side of joy. He who has realised this knows that it is pain which is our true wealth as imperfect beings, and has made us great and worthy to take our seat with the Perfect." *

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Amidst the joys and sorrows of the farmers, Tagore so re-organised the estate, and so influenced the officers with a healthy moral tone that corruption soon became a thing of the past. A few years ago one of the officers of the Tagore estate accepted a bribe of one rupee (thirty-five cents), and soon after he felt so repentant, that he voluntarily made a confession of his act, and was readily forgiven. Tagore's endeavours to uplift the condition of the farmers made him very popular with the people, and he so won their hearts that the British magistrate of the district grew jealous, suspicious and nervous about it, and began to harass him in various ways, as Lord Hardinge, the present Viceroy of India, and his lieutenants harassed him about three years ago for employing a certain patriotic young poet in his school as a teacher. At Silaidah Tagore wrote most of his short stories and the bulk of his poems.

CHAPTER V

TAGORE THE FEMINIST

Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the father of modern India, introduced an age of reform in India. Well versed in the literature of the East and of the West, he strove to unite the cultural life of both for mutual benefit. With his towering genius he handled the social, political, religious and literary life with the hand of a master. By lectures, newspapers, and pamphlets, debates and discussions he infused a new life in India, especially in Bengal. Even to-day, eighty years after his death, the social and religious reformers are working to carry out his plans. At his death, he left a unique worker as his intellectual descendant, Debendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath. Beside the help of men like Keshubchandra Sen, Shibanath Shastri,

Protapchandra Mozoomdar and Rajnarayan Bose, Debendranath found one of his best supporters and workers in the person of his youngest son Rabindranath. Rabindranath, with his keen insight into sociological problems, wielded his pen and his tongue for social, religious and political reform.

One of the very first things that he gave his attention to was the elevation of the status of the women of India by education. He never believed in the inferiority of woman. He has always believed in what Comte says: "Each sex has what the other has not; each completes the other and is completed by the other; they are in nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving from the other what the other only can give."

Long before the advent of the modern feminist movement Tagore was a staunch feminist. Even though he does not believe in unconditional woman suffrage; he thinks that if men

did their duty in politics, women would not have to vote at all. But when men cannot govern well, it is justified that women should claim the vote and even fight for it. The strong feminist flavour of the following translation from one of his letters written more than twenty years ago, is worth attention: "After due thought, I have come to the conclusion that in the life of man there is not the fulness that characterises the life of woman. There is a continuity of unity in woman's language, dress, deportment and duty. The chief cause of this is that nature through centuries has fixed their realm of activity. So far no change, no revolution, no transformation of ideals of civilisation have led women away from their path of continuity. They have, all along, served, loved, comforted and have done nothing else. The skill and beauty of these functions have charmingly mingled in their form, in their language and in their carriage. Their sphere of activity and their nature have blended one

into the other as flower and its perfume. So, nothing but harmony prevails in them.

"There is a great deal of unevenness in the life of man. The marks of their passage through various changes and functions are noticeable in their form and nature. The abnormal elevation of the forehead, the ugly protruding of the nose, the ungraceful development of the jaws are common things in men, but not in women. Had man followed the same course all through ages, had he been trained to perform the same function, then there might have grown a mould for men, and a harmony might have evolved between his nature and function. In that case, they would not have had to think and struggle so hard to perform their duty. Everything would have gone on very smoothly and beautifully. Then they would have developed a nature, and their minds could not have been tossed away from the path of duty at the least possible provocation.

"Mother nature has moulded women in a

cast. Man has no such original tie, so he has not evolved to his fulness around a central idea. His diverse, untamed passions and emotions have stood in the way of his harmonious development. As the bondage of metres is the cause of the beauty of poetry, so the bondage of the metre of fixed law is the cause of the all-round fulness and beauty of woman. Man is like unconnected and uncouth prose, without any harmony or beauty. That is why poets have always compared woman with song, poetry, flower and river; and have never thought of comparing man with any of these. Woman, like the most beautiful things in nature, is connected, well-developed . . . and well-restrained. No doubt, no irrelevant thought and no academic discussion can break the rhythm of a woman's life. Woman is perfect."

The relative status of woman in the East and in the West has been a constant theme of animated discussion. The Christian missionary,

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TAGORE IN DEVOTIONAL POSTURE

with his profound ignorance of the spirit of Hindu social organism, sees nothing but abject misery in the lot of the Hindu woman. The orthodox Hindu on the other hand, with his equally profound ignorance of the outside world, looks upon the lot of the Hindu woman as nothing short of blissful. But Tagore, with his practical knowledge of both the societies, realises that there is good and bad in both, and that proper education will cure the ills and strengthen the good. Thus he speaks of the position of woman in the Orient and the Occident:

"Judging from outside, I feel that in proportion as European civilisation progresses, woman is being rendered increasingly unhappy. Woman acts in society as the centripetal force does in the planets. But in Europe this centripetal force of woman's energy is proving fruitless to counterbalance the centrifugal force of the distracted society. Men are seeking shelter in distant nooks and corners of the earth, men

who are bowed down by the crushing struggle for existence which is partly due to wants artificially created. In Europe man is getting to be quite unwilling to burden himself with a family, consequently woman's family obligations are decreasing. The fair maid has to wait long for a groom, and the wife has to suffer from love-sickness while her husband is away to earn a livelihood for the family. The grown up son does not hesitate the least to leave his mother's home. Even though her training, tradition and nature are opposed to it, yet woman in the West has to go out and work and struggle for existence.

"This discord in social harmony, I think, is the principal reason why woman in the West is fighting for equal rights with man. The female characters in many of the plays of Ibsen show impatience with the existing state of affairs, while the male characters support them. This leads one to think of the inconsistent position of woman in the present-day European

society. There man is loath to build a home for woman, and at the same time is stubborn in refusing her equal rights to enter the arena of fruitful work. At the first thought, the number of women in the Nihilistic armies of Russia may seem appalling, but mature reflection convinces one of the fact that the time is about ripe for militancy in the women of Europe.

"Strength is the watch-word of European society of to-day. There is no place for the weak, male or female. That is why women are getting ashamed of their femininity, and are striving to prove their strength, both of body and of mind. . . .

"It is impossible for a woman in an European family to attain to the varied perfections which a woman can in a Hindu home. It is for this reason that it is deemed to be a grave misfortune to be a spinster in England. Her heart becomes sour, and she finds consolation in nursing puppies or in doing 'charity' or 'social' work. As the milk from the breast of the mother of a

still-born babe has to be artificially pumped out to keep the mother in health, so the milk of tenderness from an European spinster's heart has to be artificially pumped out for charity organisations; but it fails to contribute to the innate satisfaction of her soul.

"I am afraid that the present-day civilisation of Europe is imperceptibly extending the arid zone in its social life. The super-abundance of luxuries is smothering the soul of the home—home that is the very abode of love, tenderness and beneficence—a thing that is, above all, most essential for the healthy development of the human heart. In Europe homes are disappearing and hotels are increasing in number. When we notice that men are happy with their horses, dogs, guns and pipes and clubs for gambling, we feel quite safe to conclude that women's lives are being gradually broken up. Heretofore the male bees used to gather honey outside and store it in the hive, where the queen bee ruled supreme. Now the bee prefers to

rent a cell and live by himself, so that he alone may drink all the honey in the evening, which he gathers during the day time. Consequently the queen-bee is obliged to come out in the world of competition to gather honey, so that she may live. She has not yet been able to get accustomed to the changed conditions of life and society. The result is uneasiness and buzzing. . . .

"Such, in short, is the present status of woman in the West. And when the English philanthropists shed crocodile tears over the 'wretched condition of the women of India,' I feel mortified at such a waste of sympathy, especially when it is such a rare thing with Englishmen.

"Our women make our homes smile with sweetness, tenderness and love. . . . We are quite happy with our household goddesses, and they themselves have never told us of their 'miserable condition.' Why then should the meddlers from beyond the seas feel so bad about

the imagined sorrows of our women? People make mistakes in imagining too much as to what would make others happy or unhappy. If perchance, the fishes were to become philanthropists, their tender hearts would find satisfaction only in drowning the entire human race in the depths of water.

"No doubt when an English lady sees the small rooms with crude furniture and old fashioned pictures in the zenana, she at once concludes that men have made slaves of Hindu women. But she forgets that we all live together the same way. We read Spencer, Ruskin and Mill; we edit magazines and write books, but we squat on a mattress on the floor, and we use an earthen oil-lamp for study. We buy jewels for our wives when we have the money, and we sleep inside a string-tied mosquito net, and on warm nights fan ourselves with a palm-leaf fan.

"We have no sofas or highly upholstered chairs, yet we do not feel miserable for not hav-

ing them. But at the same time we are quite capable of loving and being loved. The western people love furniture, entertainments and luxuries of life so much that many amongst them do not care to have wives or husbands, and if married, positively no children. With them, comfort takes precedence of love, whereas love and home are the supreme things in our life. It is for this that quite often we have to sacrifice comforts, so that we may enjoy home life and love."

So Tagore sings on the Hindu "Woman"; the song in translation reads:

"The strifes and the struggles of the battle are over. Come, beauteous woman, come to wash me clean, to heal my wounds, to comfort and bless me with your soothing presence. Come, beauteous woman, come with your golden pitcher.

"The day in the mart is over. I have left the crowd and built my cottage in the village.

Come, noble woman, come with a celestial smile and a vermilion line on the parting of your hair, to bless and grace the lonesome home. Come, noble woman, come with your jar of sacred water.

"The sun shines sultry at noon, and an unknown wayfarer is at our door. Come, blissful woman, come with your pitcher of nectar and with the pure music of your bridal bracelet, to welcome and bless the unknown guest. Come, blissful woman, come with your pitcher of nectar.

"The night is dark, and the home is quiet. Come, devout woman, come dressed in white with the sacrificial water, and in dishevelled hair light the candle at the altar; and then open the gates of your heart in secret prayer. Come, devout woman, come with your sacrificial water.

"Now, the time for parting is at hand. Come, loving woman, come with your tears. Let your tearful look shower blessing on my

way away from here. Let the anxious touch of your blessed hand hallow the last moments of my earthly existence. Come, sorrowful woman, come with your tears."

And on love, which is the "woman's all," Tagore has this to say: "I believe that to love is to worship the mysterious one. Only we do it unconsciously. Every kind of love is the direct outcome of a universal force that tries to express itself through the human heart. Love is the temporary realisation of that bliss which is at the very root of the universe. Otherwise love has no meaning. In the physical world the all-pervading attraction of gravitation attracts the large and the small alike. Similarly, in the realm of the spirit, there is an universal attraction of joy. It is by virtue of this attraction that we perceive beauty in nature and love within ourselves. The limitless bliss that is in the heart of nature plays on our hearts. If we look upon the love in our hearts independ-

ently of the love in the universe it becomes meaningless. Love is bliss."

Tagore's philosophy of feminism as embodied in the realistically idealistic poetic drama "Chitra" may seem too radical even to the radical feminists of the West. And it is curious that the plot is taken *in toto* from an episode in the Mahabharata, the Hindu epic that dates back to 2000 years before the Christian era.

CHAPTER VI

AS POET OF INDIAN NATIONALISM—UNIVERSALISM

Once a Bengali friend of the Maharshi wrote him a letter in English, and he simply returned the letter in reply. Why should a Bengali write letters to a Bengali in English? This was nationalism. Tagore was taught to love India and Indian culture. In his early boyhood he was initiated into the tenets of Indian nationalism by men like Rajnarayan Bose and Jyotirindranath Tagore. In secret, as he tells us himself, they used to meet behind "closed doors, and talk in whispers" about the ways and means of the industrial and political regeneration of India. To cultivate the spirit of bravery Tagore used to go out on hunting trips, at times subjecting himself to invited hardships.

He wrote poems on patriotism and self-sacrifice. He worked with enthusiasm when his brother Jyotirindranath started a steamship-line between Khulna and Barisal to compete with an English company. He went out lecturing on the need of organisations to preach the gospel of nationalism. As a young man he realised the truth of the statement that "Nations are destroyed or flourish in proportion as their poetry, painting, and music are destroyed or flourish." Abanindranath Tagore took charge of art revival in India, and Raja Sowrindramohun Tagore that of music. Rabindranath took upon himself the task of regenerating India by poetry.

It has rightly been said that Tagore is the poet of Indian nationalism. For if by a natural disaster all of Tagore's thoughtful essays, profound philosophical dissertations, learned historical interpretations, soul-stirring short stories, powerfully allegorical dramas, carefully wrought novels, and exquisite books of ballads

and lyrics are destroyed forever from the face of this earth; still as long as men live in India he will be remembered as one of India's greatest poets, for they could never forget the message of his national songs. His songs have made such an indelible mark on the life of the nation that they will continue to shower their beneficent influence as long as the name of India will endure. Imagination itself is at a loss to comprehend, and language feels its inadequacy to express, the real usefulness of his patriotic songs in the up-hill task of nation building in India. The Philippics of the political agitators and the diatribes of the caustic editorial writers are mere pin-pricks when compared with the majestic sweep of the patriotic-fire songs of our poet. These deep appeals are lashing the little ripples into mountainous waves of unalloyed nationalism that in the India of to-day are dashing against and engulfing the rocks of selfishness and provincialism and thus helping to form a mighty, homogene-

ous nation out of a multitude of conflicting interests.

Unlike in the West where the epic and lyric feeling does not penetrate into the masses as it did when poetry was still transmitted by oral tradition, his patriotic poems are sung everywhere. In the morning when the rising sun darts its rays of liquid gold we hear his songs being sung in the bathing *ghats* and in *sankirtan* parties that go about in the street to wake people up from sleep to join at the service of God and Motherland. At scorching noon-tide, under the shade of the spreading banyan trees in lonely *maidans* when the shepherds play the King, they sing the same songs to themselves, to the birds on the trees and the cattle in the fields. And again, when the Indian landscape is bathed by the vermilion rays of the setting sun, and as the boatmen go down the river or as the village peasants flock homeward—they all sing the national songs of Rabindranath. They are sung in the national

congresses and conferences, they are sung by the athletes in the gymnasiums, the princes in their palaces, the beggars in their begging excursions, and the washermen in the *dhobi khanas*, yes, they are sung at weddings and at times of religious ceremony.

There are critics who claim that Tagore's national songs are too gentle, too effeminate, to suit the present requirements of India. It is true that he has not the fire of Hem Chandra Bandopadhya, nor the masculine force of Nabin Chandra Sen or Dwijendra Lal Roy. It is also true that he appeals to the softer emotions, and they to the sterner, and it cannot be denied that the latter also is needed in India. Apart from the unique importance of the "Bande-mataram" of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhya; the "Sleep no More" of Hem Chandra Bandopadhya, the "Banga Amar Janani Amar" of Dwijendra Lal Roy, and some of the stanzas of "Pallashir Judho" (The Battle of Pallasy) of Nabin Chandra Sen are mighty factors in the

present crisis in India. Yet, in spite of all, it must be acknowledged by those who know anything about the imaginative and speculative nature of the Hindu, that of the two sentiments—"Awake, arise, conquer and dash to earth the oppressor's rod," and "Your motherland is struggling, she is suffering, O! she is starving, who else but a dutiful son can assuage the sorrows of the mother!"—the latter appeals to the Hindu soul more strongly and has a more enduring influence. Rabindranath decidedly follows the latter path. He idealises the motherland, he speaks of her in a thousand different ways, arousing in the hearts of his readers as many different shades of passionate emotion. He speaks of her waving rice fields, her smiling blossoms, perfumed flowers, singing birds, talking streams, and inspiring mountains, noisy bazars, sweet homes, her granaries, and her playgrounds full of dear little children—and he clothes them all with the hallowing love of the

motherland—*Bharat Mata*, as she is called in India. Over and above that, with his characteristic insight into Hindu traits and temperaments, he gives some of his best national songs a touch of colloquialism and the cadences of Baul and the Ramprasadi religious songs. Both of these have peculiar tunes that appeal to Hindu higher emotions and devotional nature. Incessantly he pleads the cause of India in a hundred different ways, and always in his inimitable style. Thus he sings of Consecration:

"To Thee, my motherland, I dedicate my body, for thee I consecrate my life; for thee my eyes will weep; and in thy praise my Muse will sing.

"Though my arms are helpless and powerless, still they will do the deeds that can only serve thy cause; and though my sword is rusty with disgrace, still it shall sever thy chains of bondage, sweet mother of mine."

When Lord Curzon and Lord Minto, as India's Viceroys, were trying to strangle the nationalist spirit in Bengal by the Russian methods of partition, suppression, deportation without a trial, or strangulation on the gallows, Tagore's songs kept up the spirit of the patriots. His songs inspire our young men to suffer and to sacrifice and to die smiling for the "Mother." One of the young Emmets of India died singing the following song-message of Tagore, beginning:

"Bharsha na charish Kabhu
Jagay achen Jagat-prabhu," etc., etc.

Here is the song in translation:—

"Brother, do not be discouraged for God slumbers not nor sleeps.
The tighter the knot, the shorter will be your period of bondage.
The louder the growl, the sooner you will wake from your lethargic sleep.

The harder the stroke of oppression, the sooner
their flag will kiss the ground.
Do not be discouraged, brother, for God neither
slumbers nor sleeps."

And again when young patriots of India find themselves deserted on all sides, when their friends, relations, alas! even their own parents disown them for the crime of patriotism, they find a mine of inspiration in the song, "Follow the Gleam."

"If nobody responds to your call, then follow the path all alone, all alone; if every one is afraid and nobody wants to speak to you, then, O, you unfortunate! speak to yourself the story of your own sorrow; if while travelling in the wilderness, everybody deserts you and turns against you, mind them not, but trample the thorns and bathe your feet with your own blood, and go all by yourself. If again in the stormy night you do not find a single soul to hold the light for you, and they all close their doors

against you, be not faint-hearted, forlorn patriot, but take a rib out of your side and light it with the fire of lightning, and then follow the gleam, follow the gleam."

Tagore wants his people to follow the gleam, because he wants to see Mother India elevated to a high pinnacle of glory and success from her present state of national degradation and chronic poverty. So he offers the following two prayers for his country. The poems read thus in his own translation:

I

"Let the earth and the water, the air and the fruits of my country be sweet, my God.
Let the homes and marts, the forests and fields of my country be full, my God.
Let the promises and hopes, the deeds and words of my country be true, my God.
Let the lives and hearts of the sons and daughters of my country be one, my God."

And a nobler prayer still:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where work comes out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches the arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake." *

And he thus urges all to help to attain this heaven of freedom: "Friends, there is not time to dream any more, the time for united action

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has come"; "if you expect to live and to command respect in this world, first be prepared to give your lives for your Mother."

Love, pathos, encouragement, and the spirit of sacrifice inspire his patriotic poems, but in them there is not even a suggestion of anger, jealousy or hatred for anybody in the world. It is in this that he differs from the radical nationalist of "blood and iron." The radical in his morbid hatred for the British and in his attempt to drive them out of India after keeping their bags and baggages, loses much of the balance which is needed for clear thinking. So he always looks outside, and in the process forgets to take cognisance of the internal causes which give rise to political diseases. He is a poor doctor who would only apply soothing ointment on the skin of a small-pox patient.

"But," retorts the radical, "if outside atmosphere and environment cause the internal troubles that result in a disease, you may cure the patient, but he will be subjected to it again.

If this one patient dies, let him die, but purify the environment that a thousand more may live."

"Yes, you are right," replies Tagore, "but if the inside is not healthy it will breed disease, no matter how pure the outside may be. But I am one with you when you want to rely on yourself for reforms both internal and external."

The "moderate"—the constitutional agitators of India expect to secure all kinds of reforms by petitioning the government. Tagore has all along been opposed to this "policy of mendicancy." Beggars, he thinks, do not deserve much. Kicks and cuffs are their best reward. So he sings:

"Mother, should you send your children as beggars to the doors of strangers, who, at the sight of begging bowls, begin to hate and throw stones at them in contempt?"

In one of his essays, he elaborates this idea by saying: "Some of us think that when we

get all the reforms from the government, we shall be fully contented and there is no foundation to this fact. There cannot be any end to the situation when one side asks all the time, and the other only gives. Fat can never extinguish fire. It is the nature of the beggar to ask for more, when he gets what he wants. This increases the dissatisfaction of the beggar. When the attainment of an ideal does not depend on our own efforts, but upon the charity of others, it is injurious to us, and becomes disadvantageous to the giver. . . . So I say that if we can give our motherland the most, we can get from the government the utmost; our claim to receive increases in proportion as we are ready to give. . . . I will never accept that we have no hope but in the begging bowl. I have faith in my country—I respect self-help. . . .

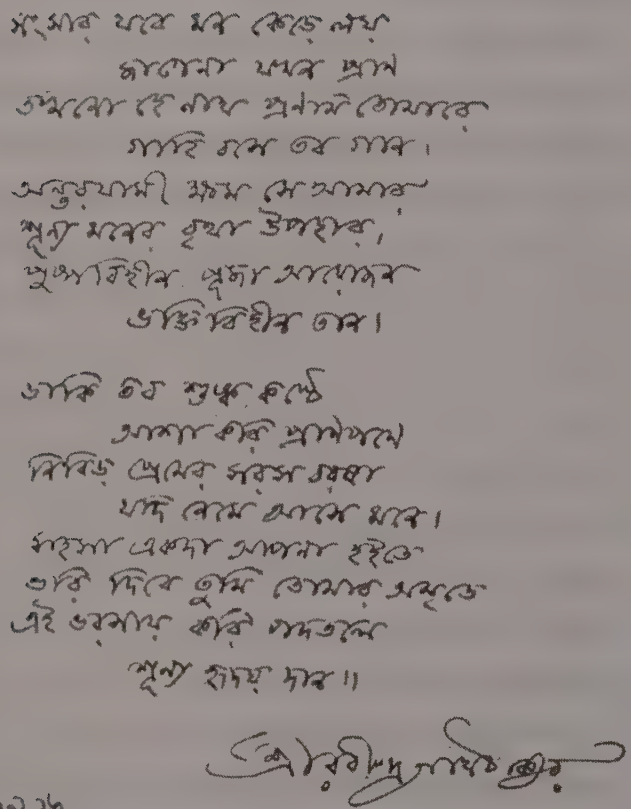
"What a pity that we (three hundred and fifteen millions of human beings) shall not be

able to bear the burden of our own country! Has it come to this that foreigners from beyond the seas shall give us alms as food, drink and clothing, and we should only complain and cry if the doles of charity do not happen to be exactly what we would like them to be? No, never, that cannot be. Each and every one of us must bear the burden of our own mother—and that all the time. This is our duty and this our glory."

On the British domination of India Tagore has this to say: "One section of the human race cannot be permanently strong by depriving another section of its inherent rights. Dharma (righteousness) depends on adjustment. When the adjustment is dislocated, righteousness begins to decline. The British are getting strong by the possession of the Indian Empire, and if they wish to render India weak, then this one-sided advantage can not last long. It is bound to defeat its own purpose. The weakness of

disarmed, famine-stricken and poverty-ridden India will be the cause of the destruction of the British Empire.

"But very few people can take a broad view of political outlook. The vision of a people becomes dimmed by cupidity. If the avaricious British politicians begin to ponder over the impossible task of holding India in subjection forever, then he would at the same time begin to forget the means of holding India for a long time. To hold India forever is an impossibility, it is against the law of the universe. Even the tree has to part with its fruits. The attempt to retain India tied by the chain of slavery only loosens the knot and shortens the period of possible retention." In the concluding sentences of his splendid essay on "The Situation and the Prescription," written about ten years ago, Tagore thus sums up the philosophy of Indian nationalism: "We do not want encouragement, we shall gain strength by antagonism. Let none fan us into sleep again, let none



১৩ মার্চ ১৯১৬
এডওয়ার্ডস।
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ONE OF TAGORE'S DEVOTIONAL POEMS IN HIS OWN HANDWRITING, IN THE ORIGINAL BENGALI CHARACTER.

increase the dose of the opium of our servitude —luxury and comfort are not for us—the fearful aspect of the Godhead is the easiest way for our national liberation. 'Oppression,' 'Insult,' and 'Want' are the three great lashes which arouse the inert. We can never attain our goal by being patted on the back or by any policy of mendicancy."

Some may uphold, and others may condemn, the philosophy of Tagore's nationalism, but none can doubt his sincerity of purpose. He is second to none in patriotic fervour. Critics look down upon his abrupt retirement, at the time of the worst persecutions, from active politics, and call him a "turn-coat." A Hindu student in America once told the author: "I don't care to see Tagore's face, I wouldn't go across the street to meet him. Even an illiterate dealer in Indian goods, who has been sent to prison under false charges, is superior to the great poet—a moral coward, who swallowed his own words and then went into retirement."

But those that know him as intimately as the author does, know full well that love of God and love of the motherland are the two dominant notes of his life. God is his constant companion, and India is the object of his constant thought. After talking with the poet on the subject and reading his writings, I feel that the true explanation of his retirement from active and direct political propagandism lies hidden in the following passages from his "*Swadeshi Somaj*" (Indian Society): "The life force of different nations is located in different parts of their social organism. The heart of a nation is there where is focussed the public good. Hurt a nation at that point and you wound it mortally. If the political power in Europe is disorganised then the entire national life is disorganised. It is for this reason that politics is such a vital issue with the Europeans. In India, if the society is hurt, then the entire nation is paralysed. That accounts for the fact that so long we have not concerned ourselves with

political right as we have to preserve our social freedom. In Europe charity, religion, and education are all in the hands of the state—in our country they rest on the sense of public duty. So Europeans take special care of the state, and we of *Dharma*. The Europeans are always anxious to keep the state wide awake. Receiving our education in English schools, most of us have come to think that to attack the government, without any reference to existing conditions, is the first duty of the Indian patriots. They do not understand that by applying blisters on other persons' bodies one cannot cure himself of his disease."

Again, in a letter written in the winter of 1913 from Urbana, Ill., Tagore says: "The present problem of India is not political. We shall never be able to fit ourselves for higher privileges unless we can do away with the narrowness of our mind and the weakness of our character. All the poison of ignorance, indifference and disunion that are in the very mar-

row of our society are standing in the way of our fullest development. Our warfare is with these. We have to train ourselves to extend our vision from the family and from the village to wider circles. We have to eradicate the hedges of effete customs and plough our social soil for higher purposes than mere truck gardening.

"Let us first liberate our society from the tyranny of hide-bound customs and dedicate it to a spirit of liberality. This is our first duty." It was to "plough the social soil" and to liberate the Indian "society from hide-bound customs" through enlightenment that he walked out of the spot-light and went into retirement, not to spend his days in idleness but to make men for the service of the motherland.

Tagore is more than a mere Indian nationalist, he is a universal nationalist—a representative of world-wide humanity. His universalism has reached the very height of perfection. He, as a twentieth century idealist, believes in

the unity of the human race—unity in the richness of its diversity. He holds that above all nations is Humanity. He holds also that the presence of the national, the racial, the creedal and the continental elements and their co-operation in human society are essential for the harmonious development of the universal; just as the presence and the co-operation of the distinct organs of the body are essential for the normal development of the man. He thinks that as the mission of the rose lies in the unfolding of the petals which implies distinctness, so the rose of humanity is perfect only when the diverse races and the nations have evolved their perfected distinct characteristics, but all attached to the stem of humanity by the bond of love. That is the reason why he believes that the East and the West have their special lives to live, and their special missions to fulfil, but that their final goal is the same. That is why he does not, as no sensible man any longer does, believe in the cynic charlatanism of

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never
the twain shall meet."

Thus he spoke in a banquet in London where the master minds of Great Britain and Ireland gathered to welcome him in their midst: "I have learned that, though our tongues are different and our habits dissimilar, at the bottom our hearts are one. The monsoon clouds, generated on the banks of the Nile, fertilise the far distant shores of the Ganges; ideas may have to cross from East to Western shores to find a welcome in men's hearts and fulfil their promise. East is East and West is West—God forbid that it should be otherwise—but the twain must meet in amity, peace and mutual understanding; their meeting will be all the more fruitful because of their differences; it must lead both to holy wedlock before the common altar of Humanity."

The story of his love for the universal, for things both great and small, he describes in the following poem:

"The myriads of human beings that inhabit the globe of ours enter my heart and find unspeakable joy in each other's company, there lovers enter and look at each other, and children stand and laugh in merriment. . . . My heart is full to the brim with transcendent joy, and I find the world without a single human soul in it. It is all empty. Oh, I know. How can it be otherwise when all have entered into my heart?"

Exactly in the same strain he writes his dainty little poem—"The Small," which, in the poet's prose translation, is as follows:

" 'What is there but the sky, O Sun, which can
hold thine image?
I dream of thee, but to serve thee I never can
hope,'
The dewdrop wept and said;
'I am too small to take thee unto me, great
lord,
And thus my life is all tears.'

" 'I illumine the limitless sky,
Yet I can yield myself up to a tiny drop of dew,'
Thus said the sun and smiled;
'I will be a speck of sparkle and fill you,
And your tiny life will be a smiling orb.' " *

And again his humanism finds perfect expression in the following song of Gitanjali:

"Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost." *

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CHAPTER VII

TAGORE AND HIS MODEL SCHOOL AT BOLPUR—ON MUSIC

Long before Tagore ultimately cut off his connection with active politics in 1907, a change was dawning in his inner consciousness, a change that demanded a fuller sacrifice for national regeneration. And after reconnoitring the entire field of politics, economics, and sociology, he came to the conclusion that if there was a panacea for all of India's evils it was education, liberal education full of freedom and love—an education that would develop not only intellect and morals, but more than that, spiritual personality. Referring to the prevalent system of education from which Tagore suffered so much, and so successfully revolted, he says: "Education is imparted under conditions that make it an infliction on young boys

innocent of any crime that makes them deserve the punishment. Let not education defeat its own ends by its methods, but make the whole process as easy and natural as possible, as also the least painful." To make this possible, Tagore decided to open a school at Bolpur. The Maharshi gave his unconditional approval to the scheme. When once his conscience spoke for it, neither debt nor adverse public criticism could daunt the spirit of Tagore. The school was accordingly started in 1902 with three or four children. Tagore's son was in the first batch of students. Tagore's idea in opening this *Brahmo Vidyalay* may best be expressed in his own words: "To revive the spirit of our ancient system of education I decided to found a school where the students could feel that there was a higher and a nobler thing in life than practical efficiency—it was to know life itself well. I meant to banish luxury from the *ashrama* and to rear boys in robust simplicity. It is for this that there are neither classes nor

benches in our school. Our children spread mats under trees and study there; and they live as simple a life as possible. One of the principal reasons for establishing this school in a vast plain was to take it far away from city life. But more than that, I wanted to see the children grow with the plants; there would thus exist a harmony of growth between both. In the cities children do not see much of trees. They are confined within the walls. Walls do not grow. The dead weight of stones and bricks crush the natural buoyancy of child nature. . . .

"I do not get the best kind of boys in the school. The public look upon this as a penal settlement. Mostly those whom their parents cannot manage are sent here." And still, under the love and guidance of Tagore and his co-workers, the boys get ready for the matriculation in six years, whereas, in the schools owned or controlled by the British-Indian government they take eight years for the same preparation.

The day's routine is quite different from any that is followed in any other residential school, excepting the Gurukul Academy of the Arya Somaj. The students and the teachers get up with the morning bell at 4:30. They make their own beds, and all come out singing songs and chanting hymns in praise of the Lord of the Universe—"who is in the wood and in fire; in medicine and in food; who is inside and outside, who pervades and permeates the universe with his living spirit." The birds on the trees wake up and join in the imposing chorus. After washing, they put on white silk robes and sit down for individual meditation and prayer. Then they take breakfast of *luchi*, *halua*, puffed rice, milk or any other light food. The school begins at 7:30. The students fetch their individual pieces of mat for seats, spread them under the trees, and without any books begin their class lessons in literature, history, or geography. Only at times of experimental sciences they re-

pair to the physical or chemical laboratories. The lessons are given orally, as the sun shines, the breeze conveys the sweet odour of flowers, and the leaves rustle to supply the music. No teacher is allowed to have more than ten students in a class. At times only one makes up a class. And the classes are not definitely fixed. So a student who is advanced in English may have his English with the senior boys of the high school, and he may have his mathematics with students in the final year in the grammar school, so to speak. By a special arrangement with the Calcutta University, the students from the Bolpur School may appear in the matriculation examination of that university.

At 10:30, i. e., after three hours' intensive study, the classes disperse as appropriate songs are sung. Soon after the students and the teachers go to take their daily bath. Some go to the stream, in the rainy season, to swim, others gather near the wells, where the older boys draw water for the younger chil-

dren, give them their bath and dress them as a mother would. After this, the older boys bathe. Bathing over, the boys chant hymns in praise of God and the *Ashram Janani* (Mother-Hermitage). The second meal is served at about 11:30. Boiled rice, vegetable dishes, pure butter and milk from the school dairy make up this meal. Then the boys study books or magazines in the library, or study their own lessons or spend the time just as they like till school time. At two the classes assemble again under the trees. In the class the teachers are not allowed to use canes nor inflict any kind of corporal punishment.

The school closes at about four. The boys then take a light lunch and rush to the playgrounds to play football, cricket, hockey, tennis, *hadu-gudu*, or other games as the case may be. In games, as in studies, the Bolpur boys excel. In football, they have defeated many Calcutta college teams. In cricket they have done the same. In military drill they can vie with the

best drilled boys in many military academies. To temper the boys in heat and cold they are made to run for miles in hot days and are accustomed to dodge no showers when it is cold. At times they are out walking twenty miles at a stretch. This Spartan training has made the Bolpur boys perfect in health. The wretched condition of the health of Bengali students is deplored on all sides. But Tagore has shown what can be accomplished by care and devotion to an ideal. Unless sick, boys are never allowed to use shoes or stockings, nay not even in the winter. Of course the winter at Bolpur is very mild and lasts only for two months.

Many older boys, inspired by the life of Tagore, deprive themselves of the games, but run to the neighbouring villages, where the Santal tribes live in crudest superstitions and pitiable unsanitary conditions, to do good to their depressed brothers and sisters. These students on entering a village pretend to begin a game,

and crowds of the Santals gather round. The boys stop their game and begin to preach to the populace. The latter respond quickly, for these young Hindu missionaries from Bolpur do not go with any sense of superiority, or preach one form of religion or decry others, but they go with a feeling of brotherhood, a sense of equality which Tagore always inculcates in his school. These simple people are in many ways more truly civilised than the people living in the most complex civilisation of New York, Paris, or London. In this spirit of "give and take" the Santals are approached. The students have now started day and night schools for the Santal children. In case of sickness they nurse them as they would the members of their own family. The Bolpur boys are so unselfishly devoted to the cause that even on hot summer days they do not hesitate to work as a common coolie, without any remuneration, to build a cottage for a Santal in need.

It is the wish of Tagore that his boys should

combine in life the spiritual tendencies of India with the spirit of social service so characteristic of Western society. Of course, many years before the establishment of Bolpur School, the same idea acted through Asvini Kumar Datta, the noted philanthropist and educator of Barisal, who established in connection with his school and college, Brojomohun Institution, what is still known as the "Little Brothers of the Poor." They are doing splendid work in Barisal.

Games over, the *brahmacharins* (students) take full baths or wash themselves clean and put on their white silk *dhotis*, and spend about thirty minutes in prayer and meditation. Then the evening meal is served. The meals at Bolpur have to be strictly vegetarian; such was the wish of the Maharshi that none should be allowed to use wine, meat or indecent language at Bolpur, nor should any religious controversy be allowed to disturb the divine harmony of the *Shantiniketan*. After the evening meal, the

students and the teachers engage themselves in various intellectual entertainments.

Contrary to the custom prevalent in India, Tagore teaches music to the students. He loves music and believes in its uplifting and ennobling influence. He has some definite ideas on the comparative merits and demerits of Indian and occidental music, which we cannot help incorporating here in translation by way of parenthesis:

"In India our best thoughts," says Tagore, "are engrossed in the devotion to song, and we have to overcome the difficulties mainly in the song; in Europe devotion to voice is their first concern, and they perform most complicatedly wonderful feats with it. An appreciative audience in India are content to listen to the beauty of the song alone; but in Europe they listen to the singing of the song. . . .

"I hold that the provinces of Western and Eastern music are distinctly separate: They do not lead through the same gates into the same chambers of the heart. European music is, as

it were, strangely entwined with the actualities of life, so it becomes easy to connect the air of a song with the multiform experiences of life. An attempt to do the same with our music would be fatuous and the result most unwelcome.

"Our music transcends the precincts of every-day life, so there is to be found so much of tenderness and indifference to worldly joys and sorrows—as if it is ordained to reveal the story of the innermost and inexplicable mystery that surrounds the soul of man and of the universe. That mystery world is very quiet and solitary with its bowers of delight for lovers and hermitages for worshippers of God, but there is no provision made for the world-wrapped pragmatists.

"It would be impertinent on my part to say that I have been able to enter into the very heart of European music; but I must confess that judging as a layman it has made a profound impression on only one side of my nature. It is romantic. It is hard to explain what the word romantic really means, but broadly speaking,

it represents the spirit of variety and exuberance,—the spirit of the dashing waves of the ocean of life, the spirit of the reflection of light and shade over things that are in incessant motion. And there is still another aspect of the romantic: it is that of vastness which reflects the calm blue sky, suggesting the presence of the infinite in the dim, distant horizon. It may be that I have failed to express my idea, but it is certain, nevertheless, that every time I listen to western music I think within myself—'it is romantic, it is exquisitely romantic, indeed.' It practically translates the various experiences of human life into musical notes. It cannot be denied that there are attempts in our music towards the achievement of the same thing, but they have not yet ripened into robust fruition. Our songs sing of the starlit night and the radiant glow of the gold-embroidered dawn; as they also sing of the universal pangs of separation felt in rainy July, and the consuming ecstasy of the spring in its youth. . . .

"Our music differs from the European in being a single strain of melody, not the harmony of various voices and instruments. Also we have numerous scales, and the melodies written in each scale are appropriate to a certain range of emotions. For example, certain airs are always sung in the morning, others at twilight, others at night; so that their strains are associated in our minds with those hours.

"In the same way a certain range of melodies is consecrated to the emotion of love, another to that of heroic valour, another to repose, and so on.

"Music, on the whole, is not dependent on words. It is majestically grand in its own glory. Why should it condescend to be subservient to words? When it is inexpressible then music is at its best. What words fail to convey to human mind music does with perfect ease. So the less there is of verbosity in a song, the better it is for the song itself. Music begins when words end."

The music classes assemble in the evenings, when singing and playing on different instruments are taught with enthusiasm, and as a result the Bolpur School has turned out some first-class singers and players. The astronomical classes go out star-gazing. The dramatic clubs rehearse seasonal plays written by Tagore. The dramatic clubs must produce every year at least two plays. Tagore himself trains the boys, and takes part in the plays to add to the dignity of the occasion.

At night the boys also edit their newspapers, of which they have four in the school. They are all written by hand, and illustrated by hand. The best paper is the *Shishu*, conducted by children between six and ten. They write poems and even literary criticisms. The Bolpur students read and make summary of important articles in the magazines of England and America for different Calcutta monthlies. The day's work ends when the students go to bed between nine and ten.

Tagore himself lives alone in a house. He gets up with the morning bell, sometimes before, and takes his morning bath, goes on the roof and loses himself in meditation for hours at a time. In this house he quite often cooks his own meals in an "economic cooker." He does not eat much. Boiled rice, boiled potatoes, cauliflowers or beans, enough of butter are all that he cares to eat. He is not fond of milk or sweets. He takes long walks for exercise and is fond of gardening. Plain living and high thinking is the key-note of his life at Bolpur. He preaches to the boys and the teachers twice a week in the temple. His love for the children is of an idealistic nature. At times one of them will steal into his room and watch him smile and move his head to and fro as he writes or thinks over a poem. One such boy startled him by exclaiming, "That's how the mad men do." "Yes, my child, poets are worse than mad men. When did you come into the room?"

Once a boy of six summers was playing with

Tagore's beard as he lay in the poet's lap. All of a sudden the child said: "Gurudev, you write so many poems, why don't you teach me how to write poems?"

"My child," replied Tagore, "the burden of poetry is exceedingly heavy, I feel smothered at times. I don't want to burden you with it."

"All right," said the child gravely, "I shall learn to write poems myself. They all seem to like your poems, even though you are burdened a little." That boy is now about ten years old, and he has written some beautiful poems in Bengali. He is a constant contributor to the school papers.

In other schools the teacher is an object of terror. The students are afraid to go near him. But in Bolpur the teacher and the students are friends,—like older and younger brothers. There are in all about twenty teachers for 190 boys, and there are no places assigned to them. There is no head-master. Every year the teachers select one from amongst them as their leader.

The present leader, Nepal Chandra Roy, a good friend of the author, has been elected for the last three years consecutively. Tagore, the teachers and the students speak of the school as "our school." They all feel that they own the school, or that the school owns them all. To teach students leadership and self-government, the internal management of the school is left to the students. Every Tuesday the students elect a captain for a week. He is the chief magistrate. Every house elects its own leader. The leaders take note of acts of misbehaviour in class or outside. The cases are not brought before Tagore or before the teachers, but before the students' court, which sits in the evening on appointed days. The prosecuted student defends himself or engages a brother student to defend him. If he is found guilty the judge asks the convicted to choose his own punishment. The punishment is generally in the form of depriving oneself of games for a day or so, or to do some extra work to keep

the houses and the gardens clean. Unkind words, like corporal punishment, are strictly prohibited in the school.

Besides the spiritual training the entire system of education is planned to develop the imagination and the faculty of observation in the students; whereas in other schools all over India, cramming is most systematically encouraged. Here boys are made to observe a single insect, or a single flower from birth to death. Tagore publishes these interesting observations in his own magazine, *Tattwabodhini Patrika.*

To watch the daily life of the Bolpur boys is exceedingly fascinating. Here a few boys are talking poetry and literature; there another group is watching the growth of an insect, or of a plant; a third group is busy feeding the birds and the animals; a fourth nursing the flower bushes as if they were their own brothers. If perchance a boy passes away, the bereaved family at Bolpur would raise a monument of bricks, bricks that are ce-

mented with tears. Like fawns these boys frolic about in their new home full of love and saturated with freedom. Many of Tagore's pupils refuse, at vacation, to go home to their parents, may be the parents that punished these boys to make them good, while others who go home, are anxious to return to Bolpur before the vacation expires. This no doubt is due to the attraction of love which Tagore uses to make the children good and happy.

The thought, the culture—in fact, the entire atmosphere at Bolpur, are all Indian; truly nationalistic and universal. And as most of the students are from Eastern Bengal, patriotism plays a prominent part in the school. The teachers and students are saturated with patriotic fervour. Though isolated in a kind of intellectual and geographical oasis, still the students are wide awake and are in touch with all the world movements. Tagore is a voracious reader. Every month he buys many books on literature, philosophy, economics, politics, soci-

ology and history. He reads them all and then presents them to the school library where the boys and the teachers read them. There are to be found books on feminism, socialism, and even single-tax does not escape the attention of Tagore and his students. He himself inflicts no particular system of political or economic theories on the students, as is done in other schools in India, and even in American universities, but asks them to read on all sides and then decide for themselves.

This kind of tolerance and the patriotic nature of the school have made the British-Indian government place this school on the "black list." About three years ago Sir Lancelot Hare, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, issued circular letters to the government officers to take their children out of that school, and asking them not to send their children there. It was apparently done because Tagore employed in his school a young patriotic poet, Hiralal Sen, as a teacher. Sen was forced out of the school by

the government; but Tagore employed him in his own estate at a higher salary. The government, to gain control of the school, offered a monthly allowance. But though the school was never in a sound financial condition, Tagore detecting the motive of such kindness, flatly refused any financial help from the British-Indian government. Tagore has given the Nobel Prize money to the school, and the royalties on his books has been consecrated for the same purpose.

Just a few days before his departure from America, in course of a conversation, Mr. Tagore said to the present writer: "There are many at home who do not realise the far-reaching and deep-seated influence of my school; but you know how, every year, I am turning out so many men, whereas in the government schools they turn out mostly machines." Whether the educational institutions of both the East and the West should turn out men or machines or just operators of machines is one of the gravest

problems of the world that needs immediate solution. Tagore is trying to solve it in his own idealistic way.

Since settling at Bolpur, Tagore's lyric genius has reached its height in "Gitanjali" and his mysticism, in his drama "Raja," now published in translation as "The King of the Dark Chamber." Here, fourteen miles from the home of Chandidas, and fifteen miles from that of Joydev, (two of India's greatest poets), he lives a life of unalloyed simplicity, thinking exalted thoughts, writing poems and plays, loving children in the school and the birds in the woods. Thus he spends his days in his quiet spot, in constant communion with the Godhead, and radiating calmness all around his modern hermitage.

CHAPTER VIII

TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHICAL MESSAGE

THE spiritual ideals embodied in Tagore's poetical and prose writings are the truths of Hindu philosophy. The Hindu is essentially of a philosophical turn of mind. Through ages of meditation on the deepest problems of life and death he has developed a system of metaphysical philosophy that has elicited admiration from many well-informed Western scholars of distinction. Lecturing before the Cambridge university in 1882, the late Professor Max Müller paid a high compliment to India and its thought, saying: "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky

the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semetic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India."

The climax of Hindu thought is in the Vedanta (end of knowledge) philosophy of the Upanishads. Victor Cousin, the eminent French historian of philosophy, thus said in 1828 in Paris: "When we read with attention the poetical and philosophical monuments of the

East, above all, those of India which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discover there many a truth, and truths so profound, and which make such a contrast with the meanness of the results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East, and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy." And again, Schopenhauer speaks of the same Hindu philosophy as follows: "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death." "If these words of Schopenhauer's," adds Professor Max Müller, "required any endorsement, I should willingly give it as the result of my own experience during a long life devoted to the study of many philosophies and many religions.

"If philosophy is meant to be a preparation for a happy death, or Euthanasia, I know of no

better preparation for it than the Vedanta Philosophy."

It is of this philosophy of the Upanishads that Tagore sings in his philosophical poems, and writes in his exquisite essays in "Sadhana." It deals with the oneness of the universe—the fundamental unity in the diversity of the phenomenal world, and the divinity of it all. Wordsworth is a wonderful nature-poet. He is intense, but at times vague in his thoughts of the spiritual in nature. His famous "Ode" is singular in its poetical charm, but it depicts the world as if it was made of woe. He thinks that "there hath past away a glory from the earth," that "our birth is but a sleep and forgetting," that "the shades of prison-house begin to close upon the growing Boy." Ten years after the completion of this "Ode," Wordsworth wrote his "Invocation to the Earth," and there, too, he addresses her as "the doleful mother of mankind."

Tagore's philosophy is altogether different.

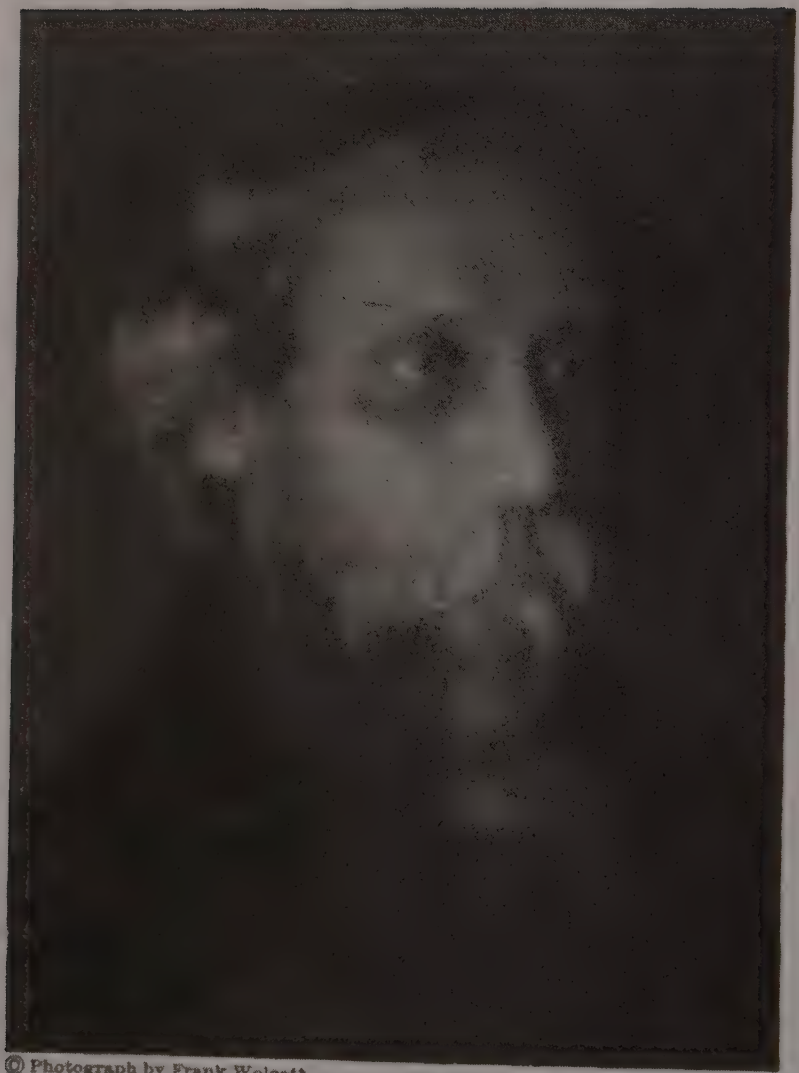
To him the world is full of joy and love, and an undying bliss dances throughout the universe. Sorrows there are in this world, but they are like the flitting clouds of Indian autumn—clouds that intensify the glory of the moon. In another chapter of this book also we have dealt with Tagore's views on the earth and his philosophy of work. Here we can not but translate his wonderful "Ode to the Earth," and take another peep into his philosophy of life, love and action. The "Ode" reads thus in translation:

"O my most enchanting Earth-Mother, how often I have lovingly looked at you, and sung out of my heart in unalloyed happiness! After diffusing the essence of my being into thy own self, you have incessantly whirled round the distant stars through eternity. And your tender grass blades have grown on me, flowers have blossomed in profusion and trees have showered their fruits and flowers on me, yes, on me. So, sitting alone by the River Padma I can

easily feel, yes I do feel, how grass seeds thrill to germinate; how the elixir of life is being perennially supplied to your heart; how joyfully the flowers bloom from beautiful stems; how trees and creepers vibrate with joy at the touch of the youthful rays of the sun, even as babies are happy when they are tired of nursing on their mothers' breast.

"That is the reason why when the rays of the autumn moon fall on the golden harvest fields, and when the cocoanut leaves dance in joy that I feel a kind of nervous joyousness, and think of the time when my mind pervaded the water, the earth, the foliage in the woods and the blue of the sky. The entire universe seems silently to call me a thousand times to come to its bosom. And from the wonderful playhouse of the cosmos I hear the faint, but familiar and joyous voice of my playmates of old.

"O Earth-Mother, do take me back to your heart—a heart whence emanates life in a thousand different forms, and where songs are being



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TAGORE AT FIFTY

sung in a thousand different notes, and dances are being danced in as many ways, and where mind is ever thoughtful, and you stand self-effulgent and all-beneficial."

Tagore, no doubt, believes with William Blake that "Man has no body distinct from his soul"; but he goes a step further, and unlike his father, who was a dualist (*Daitabadi*), believes in the *Adaita* (Monistic) doctrine of the Vedanta that this world is not only made by God, but is made of God as well.

Once a Hindu philosopher thus taught his disciple: "The world is not only made by God, but it is made of God as well."

"How can that be?" inquired the pupil.

"Look at the spider," replied the teacher, "who with the utmost intelligence draws the threads of its wonderful net out of its own body."

Some of the Western theologians "related that the God of the Hindus was a large black spider sitting in the centre of the universe, and

creating the world by drawing it out like threads from its own body."

It is from such misunderstandings that there has developed a gulf between the East and the West. Philosophy, like science, is universal. It knows neither East nor West. It transcends all physical limitations. In this respect Tagore by his lucid elucidations of complex metaphysical problems in the essays of "Sadhana," has rendered an invaluable service to humanity. The style is simple and direct. There is no attempt at metaphysical pedantry. The unalloyed elegance of style, loftiness of its thought, and the sublimity of its subject-matter would have equally thrilled Emerson, Browning and Meredith. And Bacon would have been jealous of the succinct potency of these essays—essays that deal with the realisation of life by love and right action.

Anandadhyeva Khalvimani jayante. In other words: "From the everlasting joy do all objects have their birth." "This joy," says

Tagore in his essay on "Realisation in Love," "whose other name is love, must by its very nature have duality for its realisation. When the singer has his inspiration he makes himself into two; he has within him his other self as the hearer, and the outside audience is merely an extension of this other self of his. The lover seeks his own other self in his beloved. It is the joy that creates this separation, in order to realise through obstacles the union. . . .

"Want of love is a degree of callousness; for love is the perfection of consciousness. We do not love because we do not comprehend, or rather we do not comprehend because we do not love. For love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment; it is truth; it is the joy that is at the root of all creation. It is the white light of pure consciousness that emanates from Brahma. . . . And joy is everywhere; it is in the earth's green covering of grass; in the blue serenity of the sky; in the reckless exuberance of spring; in

the severe abstinence of grey winter; in the living flesh that animates our bodily frame; in the perfect poise of the human figure, noble and upright; in living; in the exercise of all our powers; in the acquisition of knowledge; in fighting evils; in dying for gains we never can share. . . . Joy is the realisation of the truth of oneness, the oneness of our soul with the world and the world-soul with the supreme lover." *

"From love the world is born, by love it is sustained, towards love it moves, and into love it enters." This truth of the Upanishads, Tagore further develops in his essays on "Realisation in Action." "We must remember," says Tagore, "that as joy expresses itself in law, so the soul finds its freedom in action. It is because joy can not find freedom within itself that it wants external action. The soul of man is ever freeing itself from its own folds by its activity; had it been otherwise it could not have done any voluntary work. The more a man acts and makes actual what was latent in him, the nearer

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does he bring the distant Yet-to-be. In that actualisation man is ever making himself more and yet more distinct, and seeing himself clearly under newer and newer aspects in the midst of his varied activities, in the state, in society. This vision makes for freedom.

"Freedom is not in darkness, nor in vagueness. There is no bondage so fearful as that of obscurity. It is to escape from this obscurity that the seed struggles to sprout, the bud to blossom. It is to rid itself of this envelop of vagueness that the ideas in our mind are constantly seeking opportunities to an outward form. In the same way our soul, in order to release itself from the mist of indistinctness and come out into the open, is continually creating for itself fresh fields of action, and is busy contriving new forms of activity, even such as are not needful for the purpose of its earthly life. And why? Because it wants freedom. It wants to see itself, to realise itself." *

This message of love and of right action has a

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special significance at a time when so many nations of Europe are at war seeking each other's destruction. These fighting nations are practising civilised cannibalism with a vengeance. Christian brotherhood, humanitarian ideals, and the vision of universal peace have been cast to the winds. Hatred, jealousy and distrust seem to be the order of the day. Here the pacifist philosophy of life as inculcated in India by her seers like Tagore may render a great service for shaping the destiny of the nations and the races of the world. Too much meditation and metaphysical speculations have ruined India; and too much materialism shall be the undoing of the nations of the West. A harmony between the two would bring about an ideal state of affairs: The message of the war and the message of Tagore will help this cause—a cause which, when fructified, will bring permanent peace, eternal prosperity and unalloyed liberty on earth.

CHAPTER IX

TAGORE AND THE NOBEL PRIZE—HIS PLACE IN BENGALI LITERATURE

It was in one of those January (1913) days when the sun, defeated at the hands of tiny drops of befogged water, hides its face in shame and leaves the world to weep for its own folly that I stood in the presence of the poet Rabindranath Tagore in the city of Urbana, Ill., where his son was in school to learn modern methods of farming. After exchange of salutations we sat in his cosy parlours and at once plunged into a conversation.

"How do you like the country?" I asked.

"Very well. Oh! the sunshine, the beautiful sunshine even when the thermometer goes below zero, and the reflection of sun's rays on the white snow, I love it all. In England we cannot enjoy the blessings of such days. To-day it is

exceedingly gloomy here, but I feel sure that to-morrow will bring one more of those enchanted American days." Talking about nature Mr. Tagore's face was lit up as with a halo.

"How do you like the people?" I inquired.

"They are all right in their own way. They are unrivalled business men, splendid organisers and agriculturists, and matchless engineers, but there is no culture, they lack that innate refinement which characterises the people of older countries. I wish they had more culture even though agriculture suffered a little," said Mr. Tagore in a rather pathetic tone.

"But you know," I said, "America is such a vast country the cultured people are scattered all over. They are not focussed in one place as in Paris, Berlin or London. And then you have not met many people worth meeting, along your line of interest—you are living in Urbana, Illinois."

After talking about various national problems of India, I said: "I have come all the way

from Chicago to see you, of course, but principally to entreat you to translate more of your works, so that the Western world may appreciate the beauty of our Bengali literature. Bengal is not all 'bomb' and 'sedition' as the world at large is made to understand by the English papers."

"Yes, I am translating," said Mr. Tagore, as his eyes were looking at the carpet, "more of my works. I am really glad to see that Gitanjali, my first book in English, has been so well received."

"I have another idea," I said, "in requesting you to translate more of your works. It is this: when known, I feel absolutely certain that you will sooner or later win the Nobel Prize for poetry. No other man in India or Asia has won that laurel. It will not only give India an international status, but will be a step forward for international brotherhood and world peace."

"Are the Asiatics eligible for the prize?" inquired Mr. Tagore.

"Yes, most decidedly so, and you must win it," I said.

"When Kipling could get that prize, I am not prepared to say whether I deserve it or not. But you know the prejudice—the prejudice against the Asiatics. If Asiatics are eligible then why has not our Dr. Jagadis Chandra Bose, India's greatest scientist of modern times, received it yet?" said Mr. Tagore in an indignant way as his luminous eyes flashed.

"As for prejudice," I replied, "the Americans and the British are the worst sinners. The continental Europeans have no such prejudice, and the smaller but more humane powers like Norway, Sweden and Denmark, on account of the tyranny of the larger powers have a special sympathy for the oppressed nations of Asia. And you may rest assured that when the Nobel Prize Committee comes to know of the inherent quality and beauty of your writings, they will not hesitate a second to honour themselves by

honouring you. Now our first duty is to make them know about you."

"You seem to be bent," said the poet as a faint smile flashed on his lips, "on awarding me the Nobel Prize. You are the first man to suggest it to me. All right, if I get it, I shall at once start an industrial department in connection with my school at Bolpur." Mr. Tagore laughed and continued: "We are getting to be too imaginative this afternoon." And we all laughed.

Within ten months of this conversation Mr. Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for poetry.

Not only India, or Asia, but the whole world has reason to rejoice over the award of the Nobel Prize for "idealistic literature" to Rabindranath Tagore. "The award," to use the words of an American writer, "will spur the men of the West to inquire what the men of the East have said and have to say. It will interpret the East to the West as the East has never before been

interpreted. It thus becomes a historic event, a turning point in the understanding of one hemisphere by the other." It also inaugurates the dawn of a new era of friendliness between the East and the West, so long at odds on account of the age-long struggle for material supremacy and territorial aggrandisement. The mutual appreciation of the literature, arts and ideals of the East and the West will dispel the dark clouds of international animosity and help bring that day when international peace and international good-will will reign supreme on earth. If the goal of world peace is ever reached, as we believe it must be, then it will be reached by the path of cultural concourse between the Orient and the Occident, that will lead to the realisation of the fundamental unity of the human race.

When the West discovers the East, and the East discovers the West humanity will discover itself automatically. Then the illumination will come to "break the walls," and this world

will be "one luminous whole," "one perfect music."

"For many centuries no such poet and musician has appeared in India." This extravagant language is used by an English missionary admirer of Tagore in a leading English review. This statement elicited some harsh criticism from the Bengalees. I remember that when that passage was read before a group of educated young Bengalees in America they became furious. One of them shouted in true American fashion: "D—n it."

A second said: "Was there ever a greater poet in Bengal than Madhusudan Datta? His '*Meghnath Badh Kabya*' still stands unrivalled as a piece of poetic composition."

A third literary Bengali commented as follows: "Yes, Rabi Babu is a great poet, but to call him our greatest poet in many centuries is to betray one's ignorance of Bengali literature. If Mr. Tagore had ever attempted to write profound books like '*Raibatak*' or '*Kurukshetra*' of

Nabin Chandra Sen, his lyric brain would have burst before finishing even one canto of either. There are no such books in Bengali literature." A devotee of Dwijendra Lal Roy, Tagore's rival poet and dramatist, remarked sarcastically: "Rabi Babu knows well how to begin a poem, but he cannot even keep up a high standard of excellence in a single lyric. As a dramatist he is a failure, and is nowhere near Dwijendra Lal Roy. His love lyrics are poor imitations of the poems of our Vaishnava poets of old, and his philosophy is the philosophy of the Upanishads. Let the Europeans and the Americans rave over Tagore. But there is nothing new for us in his writings."

In the corner was seated an admirer of Rabi Babu. He was hurt to the core, but most quietly asked the critics:

"Has there ever been another literary man in Bengal, besides Mr. Tagore, who has reached such heights of excellence in all the subjects like

poetry, drama, essays and novels? Yes, in all of these, can you name one?"

For a minute or so you could have heard a pin drop. Not a word was uttered. There was nothing to say, for no other literary man in Bengal has done so well in so many things. Even the most adverse critics of Tagore are bound to admit that he has adorned every department of Bengali literature by his transcendent genius. Though one cannot but admire the fecundity and versatility of Tagore's genius, it cannot be denied just the same, that he has, like Ruskin, dabbled with too many things, and has written too much. He himself pleads guilty of making love with all the different branches of art. The passage in which he makes a frank confession on the subject, translates:

"I am like a coquettish lady that wants to please all her lovers, and is afraid to lose a single one. I do not want to disappoint any of the Muses. But that increases the work, and in

the long run I cannot master one fully and completely. . . . I have a voracious appetite for all kinds of art. When I compose songs, I feel that I ought to stick to it. When I am engaged in writing a play I get so intoxicated with the subject that I begin to feel that I should devote my whole life in this pursuit; and again, when I join in the crusade against early marriage [1] and illiteracy, I feel that the art of social reform ought to be the noblest work in life. At times I even paint, but for painting I am too old. . . .

"But poetry is the favourite theme of my life . . . whatever I do—edit the *Sadhana* or manage *Zamindary*, the moment I begin to write poems I discover myself and enter into my own self. I at once realise that I am in my element. In life, consciously or unconsciously I may play false, but that is utterly impossible with my

[1] Once a friend asked Mr. Tagore his opinion on early marriage. The poet was at that time suffering from rheumatism in his waist. So he replied: "Suffice it to say for the time being that if anybody wants to marry early let him do so, but let nobody suffer from rheumatism."

Muse. In poems the deep truth of my life finds its final lodgment."

"I find," says Tagore in another place, "infinitely more pleasure in writing a single poem than in writing a thousand prose pieces. In verse-writing thought assumes a definite form, and it is easy to handle it. Prose is hard to manipulate, it is so cumbrous. If I can write one poem a day, I can pass my days in happiness." And yet, Tagore's prose is declared by many whose opinions deserve attention, to be his best contribution to Bengali literature. It is claimed that in his prose writings Tagore is more thoughtful, more natural and more original. Once a visitor at Bolpur told Tagore that his prose was far superior in intrinsic value and originality to his poetic compositions. Tagore answered in silence. Of course silence did not mean the acceptance of the statement. Tagore does not like to hear that. It is not necessary to agree with this school of thought to say that Tagore's prose is simply superb in the

grandeur of its thought and subtlety of its composition. He has added a fragrance to Bengali prose which is at once rich and rare. As the father of "short stories" in Bengali he has given us a treasure which would be a cherished acquisition to any language. As an essayist, he is unsurpassed. As the author of "Gora," a novel, he has ranked himself as one of our best novelists. His letters are perfect pieces of prose-poems.

Like Milton and Matthew Arnold, had he written not a single poem, still his prose writings would have ranked him as one of the brightest luminaries in the firmament of Bengali letters. What Swinburne says of the style of Rossetti's poetry may as well be said of Tagore's prose style: "It has the fullest fervour and fluency of impulse, and the impulse is always towards harmony and perfection. It has the inimitable note of instinct, and the instinct is always high and right. . . . It has all the grace of perfect force and all the force of perfect grace."

Whatever may be said about the towering genius of Tagore, it cannot, however, be gainsaid that as a poet of love and life, he is a direct intellectual descendant of the Vaishnava poets of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, and as a poet of mysticism of the *Rishis* of the Upanishads who lived between 2000 and 1000 years before the Christian era, and of the mystic poets like Kabir and Ramprosad.

Bengali literature may well be proud of the blank verse of Mahusudan Datta and Nabin Chandra Sen, the novels of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhya, the essays of Akshoy Koomar Datta, the dramas of Girish Chandra Ghose, Dwijendra Lal Roy, and Khirode Chandra Bidyabinode, and the crystalline lyrics of Rabindranath Tagore; but the love literature of the Vaishnavas, the Krishna cult, is its rarest treasure.

The different stages of love are thus divided into five main divisions:

"*Purba Raga*, the dawn of love; *Dautya*,

message of love; *Abhisara*, secret going-forth; *Sambhog-Milan*, physical union of lovers; *Mathur*, final separation, and *Bhava-sanmilan*, union of spirit.

"In *Bhaktiratnakara* 360 different kinds of the finer emotions of a lover's heart are minutely classified. Each of these groups has hundreds of songs attached to it by way of illustration."

Chandi Das thus wrote about the love between Radha and Krishna in the beginning of the fifteenth century. Mr. Dinesh Chandra Sen translates the passage as follows:

"Among men such love was never heard of before. Their hearts are bound to each other by their very nature. They are in each other's presence, yet they weep, fearing a parting. If one is absent from the other for half a second, they both feel the pangs of death. Just as a fish dies when dragged from the water, so do they if parted from one another.

"You say that the sun loves the lily, but the lily dies in the frost, but the sun lives on hap-

pily. You say the bird *chataka* and the clouds are lovers, but the clouds do not give a drop of water to the bird before their time. The flower and the bee, it is said, adore each other, but if the bee does not come to the flower, the flower does not go to the bee. It is foolish to describe the bird *charoka* as a lover of the moon—their status is so different. There is nothing, says Chandi Das, to compare to this love of Radha and Krishna."

And again, when the separation came about between Radha and Krishna and the former felt that she was about to die from the pangs of separation the poet Govinda Das (1537–1612) makes her sing:

"Let my body after death be reduced to the earth of those paths which will be touched by the beautiful feet of Krishna. Let it be melted into the water of the tank where Krishna bathes. When I shall have expired, let my spirit live as the lustre of the mirror in which Krishna sees his face. O, let me be

turned into a gentle breeze for the fan with which he cools himself. Whenever Krishna moves like a new-born cloud, may I become the sky behind, to form the background of his beautiful form."

Rabindranath used to read these Vaishnava poets from his early boyhood and was saturated with the spirit of Vaishnava devotional love poems. At the age of eighteen he wrote some most beautiful poems (*padabali*) after these poets. Tagore tells us of an interesting anecdote about these poems. The story reads thus in translation:

"I once told a friend of mine that going through different books and manuscripts in our Brahmo Somaj library I had discovered and copied some poems by a hitherto unknown Vaishnava poet, Vanusingh by name; and I read the poems to him. My friend was startled and said: 'I must have that manuscript. Even Chandi Das and Vidyapati could not write such poems. I want to give it to Akshay Babu for

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publication along with our other ancient literary treasures.'

"Then I proved from my own original manuscript that such poems could never have been written by Chandi Das or Vidyapati, for they were from my own pen. My friend assumed a serious attitude and gravely said: 'These are not very bad.' "

Tagore thus speaks of the influence of the Vaishnava poets on his life and work: "Our boat is moving now. The shore is on our left. On the rich green verdure of the rice fields has stooped, motherlike, the deep blue of the thick and moist clouds. Thunder roars *Gur-Gur* at intervals. I am reminded of the description of the Jamuna in the rainy season as given by the Vaishnava poets. Many phases of nature remind me of the poets of old; the cause of this lies in the fact that the beauty of nature is no empty beauty for me—therein lies hidden the eternal playfulness of a mysterious heart,—here resides limitless Brindabana. Those that

have entered into the very heart of the Vaishnava poems, hear their echoes as I do, in the voices of nature."

Even though in the poems of Tagore the love fervour of the Vaishnava poets fades a little, yet they assume a newer and a nobler colour in their universality of application. "There is nothing new under the sun"; but he is an artist who can create new ideas and new imageries to cloak the old in ever new forms. Judging from this standpoint—Tagore, with all his indebtedness to the poets of the Krishna cult, is yet an original poet of the highest rank.

And in his philosophy of the Sadhana—though the basic principles of the Upanishads are known even to the children of India—Tagore has modernized them, and made complicated problems as clear as crystal.

In his devotional and mystic poems and songs, Tagore combines the simplicity of Ramprosad of the eighteenth century with Kabir, the mystic poet of the fifteenth century.

Ramprosad sang in Bengali and Kabir in Hindi. Of the simplicity of Ramprosad, Margaret E. Noble (Sister Nivedita) enthusiastically, but truly, says: "No flattery could touch a nature so unapproachable in its simplicity. For in these writings we have, perhaps alone in literature, the spectacle of a great poet, whose genius is spent in realising the emotions of a child. William Blake in our poetry strikes the note that is nearest his, and Blake is, by no means, his peer. Robert Burns, in his splendid indifference to rank, and Whitman in his glorification of common things, have points of kinship with him. But to such a radiant white heart of childlikeness, it would be impossible to find a perfect counterpart. Years do nothing to spoil his quality. They only serve to give him a self-confidence and poise. Like a child he is now grave, now gay, sometimes petulant, sometimes despairing. But in the child all this is purposeless. In Ramprosad there is a deep intensity of purpose. Every sentence

he has uttered is designed to sing the glory of his Mother." In Mr. Sen's translation he thus sings one of his most popular songs: -

"No more shall I call you by that sweet name, 'Mother!'
You have given me woes unnumbered and reserved many more for me, I know!
I once had a home and family, and now you have made me such that I am disowned by all.
What other ills may yet befall me I cannot tell.
Who knows but that I may have to beg my bread from door to door. Indeed, I am expecting it.
Does not a child live when his mother is dead?
Ramprosad was a true son of his mother;—but you, being the mother, have treated your son like an enemy.
If in the presence of his mother, the son can suffer so much, what is the use of such a mother to him?"

Kabir, unlike Ramprosad and like Tagore, did not sing to any particular God or Goddess. He was a universalist, not in its creedal sense, but in the significance of the term. He found God everywhere. Like Paul the tent-maker and Bunyan the tinker, Kabir was an artisan who made his living working at the loom. He had no education—he was not even literate. But it is not necessary to be able to read or write to produce true poetry. Kabir sang out of his heart, and his songs are now sung by millions of his countrymen. When one reads Kabir's songs, one cannot but think of Gitanjali, and we do not wonder why some superficial critics are prone to call Tagore an accomplished imitator at best. To quote a few of Kabir's songs as translated by Tagore:

"O servant, where dost thou seek Me?
Lo I am beside thee.
I am neither in temple nor mosque: I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash.

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga and renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me: thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.

Kabir says, O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath." *

In Tagore's translation he thus sings of Divine love:

"How could the love between Thee and me sever?

As the leaf of the lotus abides on the water: so Thou art my Lord, and I am Thy servant!

As the night-bird Chakor gazes all night at the moon: so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.

From the beginning until the end of time, there is love between Thee and me: and how shall such love be extinguished?

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Kabir says: 'As the river enters into the ocean, so my heart touches Thee.' "

And again, the following reminds us of the pragmatic poems of Tagore. The poem as translated by Tagore reads as follows:

"It is not the austerities that mortify the flesh which are pleasing to the Lord,
When you leave off your clothes and kill your senses, you do not please the Lord;
The man who is kind and practises righteousness, who remains passive amidst the concerns of the world, who considers all creatures on earth as his own self, he attains the immortal Being: the True God is ever with him.
Kabir says: 'He attains the true Name whose words are pure, and who is free from pride and conceit.' "

The critics of Tagore may well remember that the songs like those of Kabir might as well

have been sung by a St. Francis or a David. As Browning was profoundly influenced by Shelley, Tennyson by Keats and Byron, and Arnold by Wordsworth, similarly Tagore has been profoundly influenced by Kabir, Chandidas and Joy Dev. Tagore is not an imitator, he is a creator and that of the highest order.

Tagore was born at a supreme moment of our history. He was needed in India as Dante was needed in Italy, Shakespeare in England and Goethe in Germany. After the strife and the stress of English domination of Hindustan, the people longed for quiet. *Laissez faire* theory was practised with a vengeance. English culture threatened the indigenous; and soon the question arose for a momentous decision, whether English, Sanskrit or Bengali should be the medium of instruction. Macaulay with his profound ignorance of Sanskrit or Bengali literature wrote his merciless anathema on the former in his notorious Minute of 1835. The British-Indian government voted for Eng-

lish, and the people have to suffer still from such a stupendously stupid blunder. In the Calcutta University, English is still the first language and Sanskrit or Bengali the second language. Here, it may be mentioned, by the way, that, like the Irish nationalists the Indian nationalists are at work to regenerate the spirit of our own language, and Tagore is a paramount leader of the movement.

But when the tide of English culture and literature was about to swamp the classical culture of the country, there rose a man whose transcendent personality was strong enough to stem the smothering influence of too much partiality to an alien culture. This was Raja Ram Mohun Roy, who is so deservedly called the Father of Modern India. But though it received a great many set-backs, the modern renaissance in Bengal truly began not at the time of Raja Ram Mohun, but in the "sixteenth century when Vaishnavism preached the equality of all men, when the Sudra—the helot

of the ancient Hindu—preached shoulder to shoulder with the Brahmin who welcomed and encouraged it, when the God of the Hindu was for the first time worshipped with hymns composed by a Mohammedan, when Ram Das declared that man was free and he could not be subjected by force, and when the Brahmin accepted the leadership of the Sudra in attempting to found a Hindu state." Through many contributing causes the reformation was in abeyance for centuries, and Raja Ram Mohun had to begin the work anew. But he realised the tremendous energy of the western culture and the virility of its literature, so he stood for a compromise—rather a harmony. He, on the one hand, strongly advocated the introduction of western culture, and on the other, fervently preached the gospel of the revival of Indian culture and Sanskrit literature. The time was ripe, and he set the ball rolling, which is still moving on through "zig-zag paths and juts of pointed rocks."

Raja Ram Mohun Roy introduced into literature the use of modern Bengali. There was still a struggle as to whether Bengali should be Anglicized or Sanskritized. Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in his "*Sitar Banabash*" dealt a death-blow to the former by writing this exquisite book in chaste Sanskritized Bengali. That book still remains as one of our best books that embody pure diction.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhya decided once for all that Bengali was to be Bengali without as much direct influence either from Sanskrit or from English, and he succeeded tremendously. He combined classical Bengali with the common language of the people, and yet preserved a high standard of literary excellence.

What Bankim did for Bengali prose, Tagore has done for Bengali poetry. Tagore's path has been made easy, for the great literary geniuses who preceded him in the nineteenth century struggled hard to eradicate the thorns on the way. But fortunately for Bengali

literature, it was left for a genius of as high an order as Tagore's to proclaim to the world at large its richness and wealth of thought. Tagore combines in his writings the rich inheritance of his predecessors and the wealth of vast literature produced by the masters who were his contemporaries. The contemporaries acted and re-acted one on the other for mutual enrichment. What Walter Pater says of the Mediæval Renaissance in Europe, is equally true for the age in Bengal in which Tagore had the good fortune to be born: "There come, from time to time, eras of more favourable conditions in which the thoughts of men draw nearer than is their wont, and many interests of the world combine in one complete type of general culture. The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras, and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo; it is an age productive in personalities, manysided, centralised, complete. Here artists and philosophers and those whom the

action of world has elevated and made keen do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate."

Born in such a propitious time and in a comparatively wealthy family, rich with the intellectual inheritance of generations, Tagore, unlike most poets, never had to struggle to earn his daily bread. And, living in ease all his life, he has served his Muse, and served her faithfully and well; as he also has served his country and Humanity, conscientiously. And he has served all these to serve God with "all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind." Rich in its spiritual wealth, resplendent in its exalted emotions, the personality of Rabindranath Tagore is a living lyric of the rarest quality; and when he "crosses the bar" India will be like England ever since the death of Tennyson. In his poem, "The Infinite

Love," Tagore, who combines in his poetry the idealistic flights of Shelley, the luxuriant imagery of Keats, the exalted beauty of Tennyson and Chandidas, and the spiritual fervour of Thomas à Kempis and Chaitanya Dev, strikes the dominant note of his life and work, both of which have been tremendously influenced by the sublime philosophy and the eloquent natural beauties of India. The poem as translated by the poet himself reads:

"I have ever loved thee in a hundred forms and times,
Age after age, in birth following birth.
The chain of songs that my fond heart did weave
Thou graciously didst take around thy neck,
Age after age, in birth following birth.

"When I listen to the tales of the primitive past,
The love-pangs of the far distant times,

The meetings and partings of the ancient ages—
I see thy form gathering light
Through the dark dimness of Eternity
And appearing as a star ever fixed in the memory of all.

"We two have come floating by the twin currents of love—
That well up from the inmost heart of the Beginningless.
We two have played in the lives of myriad lovers.
In tearful solitude of sorrow
In tremulous shyness of sweet union,
In old, old love ever renewing its life.

"The onrolling flood of the love eternal
Hath at last found its perfect final course.
All the joys and sorrows and longings of heart,
All the memories of the moments of ecstasy,

All the love-lyrics of poets of all climes and
times
Have come from the everywhere
And gathered in one single love at thy feet."

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There have been three important editions of Tagore's Bengali works. The first edition was just as the poet himself arranged and named the volumes. The second edition was by Mohit Chandra Sen, a friend of the poet. Mr. Sen gathered the poems into volumes by similarity of thought, and named them accordingly. The India Publishing House of Calcutta has recently issued a new edition. It goes back to the old volumes and their titles as they were published in the beginning. Many poems of biographical interest that were left out in the Sen edition have reappeared in this new one.

We mention below some of Tagore's major works:

POETICAL WORKS

Sandhya Sangit.
Probhat Sangit.
Kshanika.
Kanika.

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Bhanusingher Padabali.
Chabi o Gan.
Kari o Komal.
Prakritir Pratisodh.
Sonartari.
Chaitali.
Kalpana.
Katha.
Kahini.
Sishu.
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Utsharga.
Kheya.
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Gitimalya.

DRAMAS AND POETIC DRAMAS

Raja.
Raja o Rani.
Dakghar.
Chitra.
Malini.
Bisharjan.
Sharodotshab.
Balmiki Prativa.
Bidaya Abhishap.
Gorai Galad.

NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

Gora.
Nowkadubi.
Chokherbali.
Bowthakuranir Hut.
Rajarshi.
Galpa Gucha.
Projapatir Nirbandha.

ESSAYS

Bichitra Probandha.
Prachin Sahitya.
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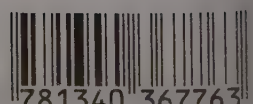

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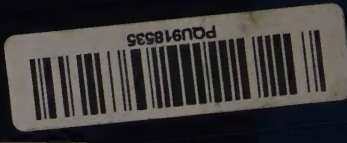

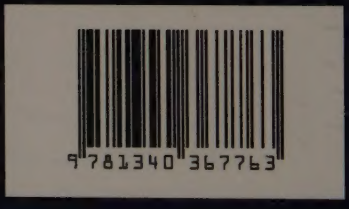

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